



Coptic Orthodox Church الكنيسة القبطية الأرثوذكسية

**Diocese of Los Angeles,
Southern California, and Hawaii**

إيبارشية لوس انجلوس

FESTAL LETTER FOR THE GLORIOUS FEAST OF THE NATIVITY 2013

“AND THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS” (JN. 1:5)

My Beloved, the Blessed Children of the Holy Church,

It is my pleasure to wish you a Blessed Feast of the Nativity, in which we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who was incarnate for our salvation.

The Birth of Christ is a new beginning for all mankind. Through His Birth, our Lord Jesus Christ has shined on humanity, similar to when light dawns and shines in the pitch-darkness. St. John said, “And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it... That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.” (Jn. 1:5, 9-10). Also, St. Matthew mentioned Isaiah’s prophecy, which said, “The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, Light has dawned.” (Matt. 4:16)

My Beloved,

The Birth of Christ holds a new, joyful, and bright relationship between God and man, man and God, as well as man and his fellow man.

God, in His great love, created man in His image and likeness. However, man did not abide in God’s love and sinned, thus coming under the condemnation of death. Yet, God’s love for man did not change. Man changed and could no longer feel God’s love, and walked away from God in the darkness of evil. Through our Lord Jesus Christ’s Incarnation, He shined on us by the light of God’s love, as St. John wrote, “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 Jn. 4:9-10)

The Birth of Christ is a new beginning in the relationship of God to man; it is a new covenant, the covenant of salvation. Therefore, we find the hymns of the Nativity sing the praises of the work of salvation. The Holy Virgin praised God saying, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” (Lk. 1:46-47). She added, “He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.” (Lk. 1:51-55). Also,

Zacharias the Priest praised God saying, “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David.” (Lk. 1:68-69). As for Simeon the Elder, when he took up in his arms the Baby Jesus, he blessed God and said, “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.” (Lk. 2:28-32).

It is the good news of salvation for everyone, both for Israel and for the Gentiles, without distinction since Christ came to save all of mankind.

The Birth of Christ is the reconciliation for all of humanity, as St. Paul said, “Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” (2 Cor. 5:17-19)

The Birth of Christ is the message of reconciliation for us, as St. Paul said, “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” (2 Cor. 5:20). The call for reconciliation is an invitation for a new relationship with God; a relationship based on love, for “We love Him because He first loved us.” (1 Jn. 4:19) Love means abiding in God, because, “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.” (1 Jn. 4:16). However, abiding in God is based on having the correct faith, for “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.” (1 Jn. 4:15). It is through the Holy Sacraments that the Holy Spirit gives us the new nature and the continual repentance, so that we can continue to abide in Christ, for “By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.” (1 Jn, 4:13). Our continuous abidance in God is nourished by our partaking of His Holy Body and Precious Blood, for “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.” (Jn. 6:56).

The Birth of Christ gives us a new beginning in our relationship with one another, for the person who abides in the love of God, opens his heart with love towards other people, “And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.” (1 Jn. 4:21) “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” (1 Jn. 4:11)

Let us rejoice in our Lord, Who loved us and came to our world to save us, to make us abide in Him, and to make us abide in love for one another.

Let us pray for the peace of the Holy Church and for our beloved father, H.H. Pope Tawadros II.

Let us pray for our beloved countries: America and Egypt and that peace may prevail in the whole world.

Wishing you many happy returns.

Bishop Serapion