



Coptic Orthodox Church الكنيسة القبطية الأرثوذكسية
Diocese of Los Angeles,
Southern California, and Hawaii
إبپارشیة لوس انجلوس

FESTAL LETTER FOR THE GLORIOUS FEAST OF THE NATIVITY 2014

“THEY FELL DOWN AND WORSHIPED HIM...
AND THEY PRESENTED GIFTS TO HIM” (MATT. 2:11)

My Beloved, the Blessed Children of the Holy Church,

It is my pleasure to wish all of you a joyous Feast of the Nativity of our God, Lord, and Savior Jesus Christ, Who came to our world to save us from bondage to sin, to rule over our hearts, and to help us enter into His Heavenly Kingdom. The Wise Men, who came to see the Divine Baby in Bethlehem, were the first fruits of the church of the Gentiles. They came from a distant nation to a foreign country to worship the Divine Child and offer to Him the submission of the Gentiles. The Wise men came to Jerusalem saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.” (Matt. 2:2) The Wise Men were both priests and Babylonian or Persian kings, who spent their time studying the astronomical signs, came to worship the Baby of Bethlehem. They realized that the Baby of Bethlehem was not an ordinary baby or just a royal baby, but rather a Divine Baby, and they came to offer Him submission and worship. They also understood that the star, which appeared to them, was not an ordinary star. St. John Chrysostom explains that it could not have been an ordinary star, but that it was an angelic appearance in the form of a star sent by God to lead the Wise Men, who were astronomers, to the birthplace of the Savior of the world. The star had an unusual motion and was exceedingly bright at midday while the sun was shining. It appeared sometimes and vanished at other times and it was at a low level to guide them to where the Child was.

The Church chose the Gospel reading for the Paramouni of the Feast of the Nativity to be the visit of the Shepherds, since they represent the simple Jews, who rejoiced at the birth of the Savior. As for the Gospel reading for the Feast of the Nativity, the Church chose the visit of the Three Kings, who represent all humanity that descended from the three sons of Noah. It is as if the Wise Men, who were the first fruits of the Gentiles, came to join the simple Jews, the shepherds, in worshipping the Messiah, Who united them both into His one Church. St. Augustine said, “Who were the Magi, except the first fruits of the Gentiles? The shepherds were Jews and the Wise Men were Gentiles. The first were close to Him and the latter came to Him from afar. But they all hurried to the Corner Stone”.

The Church chose the readings of the Psalms in Vespers, Matins, and the Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Nativity to affirm that the visit of the Magi is a fulfillment of the prophecies regarding the submission of the Gentiles to the Baby of Bethlehem. We read:

In Vespers, “The kings of Tarshish and of the isles will bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba will offer gifts.” (Ps. 71:10).

In Matins, “And He shall live; and the gold of Sheba will be given to Him; prayer also will be made for Him continually, and daily He shall be praised.” (Ps. 71: 15)

In the Divine Liturgy, “The Lord has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance and the ends of the earth for Your possession.’” (Ps. 2: 7-8)

The Magi, who were royal priests, worshipped the True King and offered to Him gold, acknowledging that He is the King of kings; frankincense, confessing that He is the True God, to Whom adoration is offered; and myrrh, as submission to the Suffering King, Who rules through His life-giving death on the cross.

My Beloved,

On this blessed feast, we rejoice in the Birth of our Savior and we offer Him submission and adoration, as we always praise Him saying, “We worship You, O Christ, with Your Good Father and the Holy Spirit, for You were born and saved us”. The last part of this praise changes according to the liturgical season. Accordingly, we say “For You have ‘come’, ‘were crucified’, or ‘have risen’ and saved us.”

Our worship to Christ our Lord is worship to the Holy Trinity, the One God, and we worship Him in His Incarnation and birth, His crucifixion, and His resurrection. When we worship our Christ, we are confessing that He is the Incarnate God and He is the One, Who gives us tranquility, peace, and security, as it happened with the Magi. St. John Chrysostom said about the Magi, “Before they saw the Baby, fear and troubles pressured them from all sides. But after adoring Him, tranquility and security descended upon them.”

Similarly, we, also, are surrounded by pain and suffering when we follow the news of our beloved brothers and sisters in Egypt facing persecution, pain, and tribulations. But we should not be troubled, since our Christ, Who suffered for our sake, is a powerful God, and to Him all the nations submit. Yes, He allows suffering to happen and is patient with the evil people, and may even flee from evil, as He fled from Herod. Although the conspiracies of the evil people may succeed, we have to always remember the words of the psalm, “He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.” (Ps. 2: 4, 9)

We pray for the peace of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

We pray for our beloved father, H.H. Pope Tawadros II.

We pray for the souls of our beloved, who were martyred, and for their families, as well as for the injured ones.

We pray for all who are troubled and suffering.

We pray that the Baby of Bethlehem enlighten our hearts with His Divine light, so we may be filled with joy, peace, and tranquility.

Wishing you many happy returns.

Bishop Serapion