

The Joy of Your Salvation
Holy Nativity Feast Message 2018

The birth of Christ the Lord brought joy to the world beginning with all who beheld His nativity and early infancy in Bethlehem. On this holy night of the Lord's miraculous birth, God presented the world with the ultimate gift—Himself. Through Christ Jesus, the prayer of the prophet David was granted, "Restore to me the joy of Your Salvation" (Psalm 52:12). Salvation is the greatest joy of the incarnation and nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. The birth of our Lord was proclaimed with great joy by a few representing all the faces of God's creation, man and woman, shepherds and beasts, wise men and heavenly angels. The prophet Isaiah foretold the titles to describe the Lord's character: "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

So often we are broken—broken by our own iniquities and mischief. So often, we are broken by others—cheated and led astray. This holy night poured the message of restoration of joy to each one of us. On His birth, we were given a new life in Christ. Forgiveness is life. No longer are we broken by sin, but Satan's siege on humanity was broken. Reconciliation between God and man began on this holy night. Indeed He is Wonderful to forgive our sins.

The once exiled children of Adam came face to face with God in the Infant Christ. Our loving God took the face and flesh of man to restore humanity in the joy of His salvation. The devil is a crafty thief that would cunningly rob you of this most precious gift. Let not your sins haunt you. Though you fall, rise in hope of the joy of His salvation. Forgiveness is the gift of grace, paid in full by the Lord Christ Jesus. Forgive yourself and forgive others. Forgiveness is the only way of life. Indeed, our Counselor is Christ, who counsels us to believe in His joy of salvation and restoration.

We are reminded of God's threefold gift of reconciliation, salvation, and restoration in every Divine Liturgy. With a heart confessed of its errors, we greet one another with a holy kiss, putting away the sorrow of sin and putting on the joy of salvation. Thus, we do not ever take His gift for granted, but continuously wash and renew our hearts in His holy and precious body and blood as we thankfully partake of the Holy Eucharist. Indeed, our Mighty God has saved us, is saving, and will save us.

Let us now consider the words of St. John Chrysostom and accept his invitation to approach this glorious occasion: "Come, then, let us observe the Feast. Truly wondrous is the whole chronicle of the Nativity. For this day the ancient slavery is ended, the devil confounded, the demons take to flight, the power of death is broken, paradise is unlocked, the curse is taken away, sin is removed from us, error driven out, truth has been brought back, the speech of kindness diffused, and spreads on every side, a heavenly way of life has been implanted on the earth, angels communicate with men without fear, and men now hold speech with

angels." Indeed, our Everlasting Father, is amongst His children here on earth, wiping away every stain of sin and every tear of godly sorrow.

On a dark night more than two thousand years ago, the light of Christ illuminated the world. It was not just a star or angels, but His brilliant beauty that made their luminous bodies shine ever so much brighter. The message of His birth being far greater than even their own beings could contain the joy, beamed His light in this glorious message that eclipsed their natural light and outshone them by His splendor. Though sin lurks in every corner, let us pray each day with David the psalmist and say, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me *by Your generous Spirit*" (Psalm 52:12). Indeed, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace who has restored unto us His salvation and His everlasting peace will forever fill our hearts.

Though many terrorist assaults aimed at breaking the Christian spirit have been relentless in 2017, we celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus, God incarnate, with great joy in His salvation. Christ the Lord is indeed, "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." The families of the martyrs and the injured remain in our hearts and prayers, as we are confident in the Lord's mercy and love for all His children. Through the intercessions of the blessed Ever-Virgin Mother St. Mary, and all the angels and saints, we ask the Lord to preserve the life of our beloved father, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, for many years and peaceful times.

To God be all the glory, forever. Amen.

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