

## The Greatest News

My Beloved Children,

The Lord is born! Let us glorify Him! I wish you all the happiness and blessings of the Nativity Feast and a healthy and prosperous new year. Let us rejoice and celebrate together the glorious birth of the Lord Jesus Christ who bowed the heavens and emptied Himself to come to us, to live among us, and to save us. As the apostle Jude exhorted the believers with this greeting, “Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you,” (Jude 1:2), I also extend the same to each of you. Declaring the incarnation of the Logos cannot be mingled with negativity and hostility toward one another. Heaven and earth are reconciled. Peace on earth begins with each person, one by one. Reconciliation scorches demons because they cannot understand forgiveness since it requires humility. Thus, set your pride aside that you may proclaim the greatest news.

It seems we conveniently forget that the Lord Jesus gave us the commandment of love (cf. John 13:34). This was not merely a suggestion, a theory, a request, or a hypothetical possibility. It is a commandment with no contingencies. “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23–24). Having sincerely performed this commandment, join the chorus of those who approached the Holy Infant in Bethlehem and offer Him the gift of obedience. Honesty is required: “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (1 John 4:20).

With constant reminders of overwhelming news, do not lose sight of the greatest event that influenced history and changed the course of life. While angels, shepherds, and wise men rejoiced, the wicked and evil Herod was dismayed and unleashed his ugly vengeance on the innocent. He rejected the Holy Infant because darkness and light cannot co-exist. In all diabolic warfare, remember that Immanuel is with us. “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23). Beware and be watchful for evil hides in plain sight.

As the vile ruler desired to destroy the Child Jesus, be vigilant to protect your children, your marriage, your family, and yourself, because Satan craves to ruin the family and every soul. Proclaim the greatest news by resisting this destructive force. Flee from all evil like the Holy Family (cf. Matthew 2:13–14). Do not be an unwelcoming innkeeper insisting that there is no room for Him. Open your hearts to Him. The incarnation of the Word is for the salvation of the world. We are redeemed by the blood of His only-begotten Son. In your baptism, you were consecrated as a temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Therefore, welcome the Lord and make room for Him. Gather your family together and seat the Lord at the head of your table.

Let this be a year of reconciliation. Let there be no discord among you. Resist the devil by reconciling with your brother, your sister, your spouse, your children, your parents, your neighbors, and anyone whom you may have offended or may have been offended by you. Herald the greatest news in how you live and how you love. Let us glorify the incarnate and eternal Word of God! May the Lord increase you in mercy, peace, and love. Show your gratitude by bestowing kindness and genuine goodwill to those around you. We pray, beseeching the intercessions of the Ever-Virgin St. Mary, Archangel Gabriel and all the angels, St. John the Baptist and the prayers of all the saints, and the prayers of our blessed and beloved patriarch, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II. May the Lord protect and keep him for us for many years and peaceful times.

“Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (Luke 2:14)

God bless you.

Bishop Youssef  
Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States