



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

Nativity Feast 2024 Message

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

A blessed feast of the glorious Nativity and a peaceful and fruitful new year to all.

Today we gather to celebrate our humble God and King of us all, the Eternal Logos, coming to save us. The awaited Messiah and the *Desire of All Nations* (Haggai 2:7) is born in the flesh and the hymns of our Mother the Church have us proclaim: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was born of the Virgin, in Bethlehem of Judea, according to the prophetic voices.”

The voices of all the prophets of the Old Testament rejoice and praise a symphony to God that their prophecies inspired by the Holy Spirit are fulfilled:

The Prophet Daniel rejoices that the *stone cut from a mountain without human hands* is Christ born of the Virgin without the seed of man (cf. Daniel 2:34-35).

The Prophet Ezekiel rejoices seeing the *eastern door* is the Virgin Mary from whom the Lord came out and her virginity is sealed (cf. Ezekiel 44:1-2).

The Prophet Isaiah and Simeon the Elder rejoice as they observe the Virgin who conceives and gives birth to a Son called Immanuel (cf. Isaiah 7:14; Luke 2:25-35).

We praise with the Prophet Micah in the Praxis Response that the ever-existing *ruler of Israel* is received in a little unknown town: “Hail to Bethlehem, the city of the prophets, in which Christ was born, the Second Adam.” (Micah 5:2)

St Paul the Apostle reminds us of King David’s words in the Pauline epistle and Acts reading and we sing today from King David’s second Psalm: **“The Lord has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.’” (Ps. 2:7)**

The Lord reminds us, **“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” (Matthew 5:17)**

Therefore, let us rejoice with all these prophets and generations of the faithful that the One without flesh was incarnate and the One with no beginning has come to save us! His fulfillment of the prophecies and emptying of Himself to become man (cf. Philippians 2:7) is for our salvation, the remission of our sins, and eternal life.

The purposes and achievements of the Lord's incarnation we understand from the words of our Savior Himself:

"For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." (John 18:37)

Indeed He is the Truth Himself and bids us to bear witness to Him in our families, our schools, our work places, and our communities at large for the Church is indeed "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15) and Her teachings are light and life in the world. **"I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me should not abide in darkness." (John 12:46)**

The Lord proclaims, **"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick...I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."** (Matthew 9:12-13) and thus urges us to draw near to Him in repentance imploring His grace that we may be healed from our indifference, anxieties, and vices.

"...the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10)

Therefore, when we find our precious lives being lost and consumed with distractions, worries, and temporal pleasures; our precious relationships with spouse, children, parents, loved ones and friends being damaged and severed by selfishness and apathy toward reconciliation—let us return to the Lord and rebuild the altar of our hearts and our homes. **"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."** (Hebrews 4:16) Let us allow ourselves and our families to be found, saved and served by Him through the means of grace: our prayer life, our reading of the Holy Scriptures, and our participation in the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church.

For **"the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."** (Matthew 20:28). So when we find ourselves struggling and laboring without the Lord, let us return to the Source of Life who has come to offer Himself to us and said, **"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."** (John 10:10) **"...I did not come to judge the world but to save the world."** (John 12:47)

St Athanasius the Apostolic teaches us the purposes and accomplishments of the incarnation of our Savior are just as innumerable as the waves of the sea, (*On the Incarnation* 52) and yet we glean from these verses that the prophecies are fulfilled and our Savior has come to bear witness to the truth. To call sinners to repentance. To seek and save the lost. Not to be served but to serve. To give us abundant life. As light that whoever believes in Him may not remain in darkness. The God who created us to abide in relationship with Him forever has sent His Only-Begotten Son, not to judge the world but to save the world.

**"To preach the gospel to the poor;
...to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."** (Luke 4:18-19)

Indeed may the Lord bless this new year of 2024 to be proclaimed as the acceptable year of the Lord for all: individuals, couples, families, communities, churches, nations, and the entire world. As He reconciled the heavenly with the earthly and brought peace on earth by His incarnation, let us pray that He restore peace to the nations at war and all those suffering around the world, and especially those so close to the place of His glorious nativity.

Through the intercessions of the Mother of God, Saint Mary, and all the angels, martyrs, 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.

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Metropolitan Youssef

Bishop Basil

Bishop Gregory

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