



**Bishop Youssef**

## **COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES**



### **Blessed Nativity Feast 2021**

My Beloved Children,

I wish you the many blessings of the Holy Nativity Feast. The glorious nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ has instilled in us many lessons from year to year. What do our eyes see on this astounding night? We need to see things through Him and to take heart of all the good that He brings out of every situation. He taught us that giving is better than receiving and receiving is contingent upon giving (Acts 20:35). He taught us that perfection as children of God requires loving all, even our foes, and blessing those who curse us, doing good to those who hate us, and praying for those who spitefully use us (Matthew 5:44). He taught us that entering through the narrow gate will lead us to the inheritance of His eternal, infinite, and glorious kingdom (Matthew 7:13). He taught us that greatness is reliant upon humility (Matthew 18:4) and leadership rests upon service (Mark 9:35). Take notice of the paradox of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ “that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). He taught us many lessons, but the world has not learned to appreciate God’s love though His mercy to all humanity is evinced: “*He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust*” (Matthew 5:45).

Let us consider this past year and the history of mankind. We blamed wars, economic turmoil, plagues, and more recently, a mutating virus for our miseries. Yet, we do not look into ourselves. Rather, we demand swift healing so that our former ways may be restored. People were dismayed when restaurants and bars were closed. Yet, the poor do not feast at restaurants and Christians do not rejoice in bars. Wedding receptions became more convenient and advantageous than praying and witnessing the work of the Holy Spirit in the Crowning Ceremonies. No longer can we think nor behave in that manner. Joyfully, many have awakened from that miserable state of lukewarmness and transformed their prayerless homes into churches. We should not desire to return to what we were and how we lived, but rather to raise our eyes to God and ask for a better place and a better way. That was the folly of Lot’s wife for she looked back at what she had and what she left (Genesis 19:26). We should follow the example of our father Abraham, who turned his back on the former evils of the land. He trusted and followed God into a new place. He looked ahead with a humble spirit and allowed his kinsmen to choose a portion first, and so God blessed Abraham more and more (Genesis 13). In St. Mary’s song and praise, she recalled how the Lord greatly blessed our father Abraham and fulfilled all His promises to him as the world would behold the nativity of the Lord Jesus Christ, “*As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever*” (Luke 1:55).

Let us pray for the world, as day by day, the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ approaches, that we may be watchful like the shepherds, wise like the Magi, faithful like St. Joseph, and humble like St. Mary. These are the qualities of the people that welcomed the Lord when He came to us as an infant and these are the qualities that we must keep when He returns to us in His glory. We pray for our churches not just to open for activities, but to open with the resounding power of prayer and faith. When we pray for each other, those suffering illnesses, loss, grief, and any form of hardship, we pray “*looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*” (Hebrews 12:2). Indeed, no matter the difficulties, we can be assured that Christ is Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14), God is with us, and what He endured for us is for our glory with Him. We pray for our honored father and patriarch, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, and beseech the Lord to preserve his life upon his throne for many years and peaceful times.

Christ is born, let us glorify Him!

Bishop Youssef  
Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

Bishop Basil

Bishop Gregory