



The Papal Encyclical of the Glorious Feast of Nativity, 2024

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.

I congratulate you, my beloved ones for the New Year and for the Glorious Feast of Nativity. I congratulate you from the land of Egypt, from the land of Saint Mark the Apostle, the Evangelist of Egypt. I congratulate you on this feast. I send congratulations on behalf of all Copts in Egypt. To all the Coptic dioceses and churches around the world. I congratulate the fathers; the metropolitans and bishops. And the fathers priests, hegumens, and presbyters. I congratulate church boards and deacons. I congratulate all the Coptic people who celebrate Christmas according to the Eastern calendar which falls on January 7th.

There are many reflections on Christmas. Perhaps the important question that concerns us all is: "Where is Christ?" The world has a long history of asking since the infant Jesus appeared to the shepherds and told them: "I bring good news to all people." (Luke 2:10), they were shepherds were taking care of the sheep. They were in the desert. At night, they guarded the flocks they shepherd. Then we find that when the angel indicated to them this great joy, these shepherds walked to the manger and saw Jesus Christ as a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths. This was their joy. After they saw Christ, they left. The same question was posed with the wise men of the East, the Magi, who also according to their books, knowledge, and research into the stars, when a star with special characteristics appears and moves from east to west, the result is that they reach the newly born King of the Jews. They got fatigued from traveling. We all know that travel possibilities in the past were very limited. They took weeks and months on the way. They arrived at the house of the king who was born in Bethlehem. They found him and gave him their gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. The same question was asked of Herod, King of Judea. But his heart was evil. So, he wanted to look for the baby. He pretended that he wanted to honor Him as a king. But in reality, he harbored evil. We then heard that Herod was the one who ordered the killing of the children of Bethlehem. His heart was evil.

The question that preoccupies us as we celebrate Christmas is: "Where is Christ?" Perhaps we search for Christ in big houses and rich, expensive places. And places that live in the luxury of technology in all its forms. Or in the places where we mistakenly think Christ dwells. Such as places of palaces and places of great living. But the truth is that we find Christ in places we may not expect. Maybe we find Him in a place like Bethlehem. It is a small, obscure village that no one knows. We find Him not in human dwellings, but in animal mangers. We find Him in a place where we do not expect Him to be. This place is characterized by simplicity and purity. Therefore, when you want to search for Christ, search for Him in simple places and pure places. And places that are characterized by purity, holiness, and innocence in life.

We find Christ in weak hearts. Look for Him. Therefore, beloved, if you want to celebrate Christmas, celebration is not just about new clothes, food, a Christmas tree, and many decorations. This is a joyful celebration, but it is on a social level. On the spiritual level, you must search for Christ and find His trace. Look for Him to see Him and be happy with Him. Look for Him in every humble-hearted person. Look for Him in every human being who seeks peace. Look for Him in every person who wants to serve others. Search for Christ.

I remember that one day a group of young men from Australia came and asked to serve. So, I sent them to a small village in Beheira Governorate, close to Alexandria. When the young men returned from serving this village, the only expression they said to me was: "There we Christ." So, the Christmas celebration is not that you give. Offer your effort, time, thought, money, and service. And through these many offerings you will see Christ. Do not live for yourself and do not live alone and selfishly. But live for others. And search for all souls that have weakness. Souls who suffer from hardships, diseases, or troubles, or who are burdened, as the Bible expresses. Make Christmas not just the time of Christ's birth that we celebrate at the end of the year while you search for Christ everywhere. The result will be that you will find great joy that fills your heart.

I remember a beautiful story about a man who was selling Christmas trees. When he wanted to sell his last trees on Christmas Eve, no one came forward to buy them. He was disappointed that he would return home without sufficient income. He did not have enough money to bring food or give a gift to his daughter. So, his daughter suggested to him, since Christmas was almost over, take these trees and give them as gifts to others. He began to choose some of the houses in the neighborhood where he lived. So, he went to the first house and presented a tree as a gift. The owners of the house received him, a man and his wife who were seriously ill. They were very happy with that tree. Then he went to the second house to offer a tree. He found that the mother in this house lost her daughter. She was sad and did not want to celebrate Christmas. When he gave her the tree as a gift, her Christmas joy was restored. Then he went to the third house to offer them a tree. He found a husband and wife having a dispute, and the wife was about to divorce. When he presented the tree, they were happy with the tree and rejoiced in Christmas. The beautiful result was that in the first house where the husband was with his sick wife, they wanted to express their joy, so they offered food to this man. Then, a little later, in the second house, the mother who had lost her daughter wanted to express her joy and give him a gift. She was knitting a sweater for her daughter who had passed away. So, she took the sweater and gave it as a gift to the man. So, the father took it and gave it as a gift to his daughter. The third house, which was about to be divorced, when the Christmas tree came to them, the husband and wife began to review themselves and tore up the divorce papers. And the peace dwelt in the house. After they came together, they presented gifts to this man. This man and his daughter were so happy with the food, presents, and gifts. This was their joy at Christmas.

I am happy to send you this message. To all our churches and parishes. I am happy that we met through this message in our celebration of Christmas. I hope for you joy and happiness that fill your hearts on this Christmas and the beginning of the new year. I repeat my congratulations to all of you, to all the churches, dioceses, and monasteries, and to all schools and seminaries. I send this congratulations to you from the land of Egypt, which was blessed by the visit of the Holy Family in the first century AD. It was blessed by the prophecies which we read in the book of Isaiah. It was also blessed by the preaching of Saint Mark the Apostle. May God protect you and be with you. Happy New Year and Merry Christmas.

Pamadas II