



COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF NORTH, SOUTH CAROLINA & KENTUCKY

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD. AMEN.

My Beloved, Priests, Deacons, Servants, Members of Church Committees, and all the Congregation, grace and peace be with you on this most joyous occasion as we celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ and the profound mystery of His Incarnation—God taking flesh to dwell among us.

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

These words of the Evangelist capture the essence of Christmas. This is not merely a historical event, nor is it simply a sentimental story of a baby born in a manger. It is the most important event in human history—the moment when the Creator of the universe entered His creation, humbling Himself for our salvation.

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:15-17)

In a world that celebrates power, wealth, and prestige, the birth of Christ is a profound mystery. The King of Kings chose to be born in a humble manger, not a palace. He entered the world not with the fanfare of royalty but in the stillness of a Bethlehem night, surrounded by shepherds and animals. What great humility is this?

While being fully God, Christ took on our humanity. He came not as a superhuman figure but as one of us—vulnerable, weak, and dependent. Imagine the unfathomable reality: the God who spoke the universe into existence came as a baby, with real flesh and blood, subject to hunger, pain, and even death.

About this great mystery, St. Augustine writes,

"Man's maker was made man, that He, Ruler of the stars, might nurse at His mother's breast; that the Bread might hunger, the Fountain thirst, the Light sleep, the Way be tired on its journey; that the Truth might be accused of false witness, the Teacher be beaten with whips, the Foundation be suspended on wood; that Strength might grow weak; that the Healer might be wounded; that Life might die." St. Augustine

Why would the Almighty choose this path? Why subject Himself to suffering and rejection? Why allow Himself to feel pain? It is because of His great love for us—a love so deep that He was willing to step into our brokenness to bring us healing, life, and hope.

At times, it's difficult to believe that the God of the universe, the One who holds all things in the palm of His hands, truly cares about us in this way. We may feel forgotten in times of hardship or doubt His love when we fall into sin. But the Incarnation is the ultimate proof of God's love for mankind and His care for every one of His children on earth.

Remember the words that God spoke to Moses when His people were enslaved in Egypt:

"I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them..." (Exodus 3:7-8)



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This is what Christmas means—God has come down to deliver us. He is “Emmanuel—God with us.” He doesn’t just sit idly in heaven, watching us suffer from a distance; He comes down and enters into our world to save us and heal us and restore us to life. Through His Incarnation, God took on our frailty and walked in our shoes, as St. Paul teaches us in Hebrews 2,

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same...In all things He had to be made like His brethren.” (Hebrews 2:14, 17)

Why did He do this? Because He cares. He cares about you deeply, unconditionally and eternally. He cares about you more than you will ever know.

As a mother cares for her nursing infant in ways that the child can never comprehend, so too does God care for you and me and all His children in ways that we will never understand. And no where is that care exemplified more than in His glorious and life-giving Incarnation.

“For you know the grace of our 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)

So while the world celebrates Christmas with decorations, parties, and presents, let us remember the true reason for the season: YOU. Yes, you are the reason Christ came. He came to restore your life, to redeem your soul, and to bring you into His eternal joy.

My beloved children, what greater reason do we have to rejoice than this?

“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.” St. John Chrysostom

Let us celebrate this feast not as mere spectators. Let us respond to the love of Christ by drawing near to Him in faith and obedience. If you have wandered from God, know that His arms are open to welcome you back. If you are carrying burdens, lay them at His feet.

Let this Christmas be a turning point—a time when you embrace the gift of new life and live in the fullness of His grace. Let us go forth from this celebration not just as recipients of His love but as witnesses of His light, sharing the joy of the Incarnation with a world in need.

Through the intercessions of the pure Virgin, Mother of God and Mother of Light, St. Mary, and through the prayers of the blessed elder, St. Joseph the carpenter, and through the prayers of our holy Father and Shepherd, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, merry Christmas to you all.

Bishop Peter

Bishop, Diocese of North, South Carolina & Kentucky
And Papal Vicar of the Churches of Virginia