

## Papal Message for the Feast of Nativity, January 2005

Contributed by H.H. Pope Shenouda III  
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My beloved children and brethren in all our churches in the lands of immigration:

Peace to you and grace from the Lord, wishing you a joyous feast, a blessed year, a holy life and success in all that you do.

He cared for the weak and sinful, and uplifted the tax collector more than the Pharisee, and about Zacchaeus the tax collector, He said "Today salvation has come to this house..." He chose Matthew the tax collector and made him one of the twelve, and uplifted the sinful and said "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." And He forgave the sinful woman (Luke 7, John 8, Luke 19, 18)

The Lord Christ uplifted the children who were cast out by the elders and said "Let the children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God." (Luke 18:16) He said "...unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven..." (Matthew 18:3) and He blessed the children.

He also uplifted the status of the women, and blessed the females and their service, "And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him..." He used to go to the house of Mary and Martha in Bethany (Luke 10:38-42). He blessed Mary Magdalene and made her His disciple, and firstly appeared to her after the resurrection (Mark 16:9), and sent her to preach to the disciples (Matthew 28:10). He defended the repentant woman who wet His feet with her tears, and preferred her over the Pharisee (Luke 7:44-46).

The Lord also uplifted the Gentiles and invited them to His Kingdom, whereas they were previously outcast by the Jews, being strangers without covenants or promises, without a law or hope. He said "...many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 8:11) He included them in evangelism saying "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them..." (Matthew 28:19) and about the gentile Centurion, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" (Matthew 8:10)

The Lord commended the faith of the Canaanite woman, and said to her "O woman, great is your faith!" (Matthew 15:28) despite that she is from a people that were previously cursed!

The Lord had a big heart giving His compassion to all: He was compassionate towards Peter, despite that he denied Him three times, and He confirmed him in the Apostleship saying "Feed My lambs...Tend My sheep" (John 21:15, 16) And that great man Nicodemus, the member of the Sanhedrin, who, despite his greatness feared the Jews, his fear was not detested by the Lord, when he came to Him by night so that no one will see him (John 3:2). He lowered Himself to his weakness, and little by little, planted faith in his heart. After this, he became one of His disciples, and defended Him when He was attacked by the Pharisees (John 7:50, 51). Later, he shared with Joseph of Arimathea in shrouding Him (John 19:39, 40).

The Lord, in His incarnation, was a hope to those who have no hope and a help to those who have no help, especially to the sick who had incurable diseases, such as to the sick man of Bethesda, who spent thirty eight years in his sickness (John 5), and to those who were blind or paralyzed, or struck with leprosy, or have unclean spirits. In Him, they all found comfort and healing.

He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38), and every person that met Him, received from Him a special blessing. Even Saul of Tarsus, who was persecuting the Church, the Lord appeared to him and called him (Acts 9). Even the thief crucified next to Him... The Lord was an open heart to all, young and old, to the simple fishermen as well as to the educated like Saul who was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Even the Samaritans who were despised by the Jews, who did not deal with them, Christ received them unto Himself, spoke to them, and many of them believed (John 4:39, 41). Even the soldier who pierced Him with the spear upon the Cross, had a share and believed (Matthew 27:54).

Likewise all those who live in toil, have a share in this big heart, Who said "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Because of all this, I want all of you to live in the manner of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to care about each person, just like our teacher John the evangelist said about the Lord "He who says he abides in Him, ought himself also to walk just as He walked." (1 John 2:6) May the Lord help you all in building His Kingdom.

May you all be well, healthy in the Lord, and absolved from His Holy Spirit. May you be in the fullness of grace every year.

H. H. Pope Shenouda III