

## Papal Message for the Feast of Nativity, January 2004

Contributed by H.H. Pope Shenouda III  
Wednesday, 07 January 2004  
Last Updated Sunday, 19 August 2007

My beloved children in the lands of immigration,

Peace to you from the Lord and grace, and a special blessing on the occasion of the New Year. May God make it a blessed and joyous year. I greet all of you during the Feast of the Glorious Nativity, with all that the Birth of Christ carries of deep meanings.

The most important message that the Birth of Christ carries is the Good News of Salvation. With this, the angel announced to the shepherds saying, "I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10, 11) About this salvation, the angel who announced to Saint Joseph, said, "and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)

Truly, this is the salvation that the prophets of the Old Testament prophesied of. This is the reason of our joy in the Nativity. Of this, the Lord of Glory said, "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10) Therefore when Simon the elder carried the Infant Jesus, he prayed saying, "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples." (Luke 2:29-31)

If we separate the Birth of Christ from salvation, then we have separated the Nativity from its main purpose. And if we rejoice in the Birth of Christ, without rejoicing in this salvation, then our joy is in vain and without meaning. For the Holy Father sent His Son to the world "that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:17) By this, the love of God was manifest to us, that "He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10)

God desires our salvation, "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:4) The Divine Incarnation was for the sake of this salvation, and with this, salvation was completed on the Cross.

Here, I want to ask each one of you: In the celebrations of the Feast of Nativity, do you rejoice in this salvation, for the sake of which Christ was born? And when you commune from the Sacrament of the Eucharist on this day, do you have communion from the Holy Sacrament "for salvation, remission of sins and eternal life to those who partake of Him?"

The Lord was incarnate for our salvation, and granted us the Sacraments of the Church for our salvation; and He rejoices in our salvation. But do we care for the salvation of our souls, and work at keeping this salvation so that we do not lose it or be far from it...? Saint Paul the Apostle warns us saying, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...?!" (Hebrews 2:3)

Therefore my brother, be careful about the salvation of your soul. You possess one soul: If you win it, you have then gained everything. And if you lose it, you have then lost everything. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in His ever-lasting expression, says, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26)

Our life on earth is a period of examination for us: Will we deserve the Kingdom or not? Let us be careful that our souls are clean and pure and without blame before God. This happens by living a life of repentance and a life of righteousness. Let us strive to the life of holiness, without which no one can see the Lord. For "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8) More so, let us strive to perfection, as far as possible, fulfilling the saying of the Lord "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48)

I rejoice greatly, when I hear that my children who are in the lands of immigration, live a life of righteousness, and strive to perfection; and offer to the society around them a good image about God's children who were created in the image of God, in His likeness (Genesis 1:26, 27). Those who saw in the Lord Christ, at His birth and during His incarnation, what reminds them of the image of God.

Be in all goodness, absolved from the Holy Spirit of God.

May this Feast be a blessing and peaceful to you.

Shenouda III  
Pope of Alexandria and

Patriarch of the See of St. Mark