



Coptic Orthodox Church
Diocese of Melbourne and
Affiliated Regions

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COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH • Diocese of Melbourne

Feast of Nativity

7 January 2012

His Grace Bishop Suriel

Bishop of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions

Born Prince of Peace!

Dear beloved of the Christ Child, clergy and laity, I wish you all a holy Feast of Nativity and a successful and peaceful New Year.

Today we celebrate the Birth of the Lord Christ Who is the Prince of Peace. The prophecy of Isaiah the prophet has been fulfilled who said, "For unto us a Child is born, and unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6) "Child is born" speaks of Christ's human nature; and "a Son is given" unites His two natures in one Person. The Son of God is also the Son of the Virgin. As St. Cyril of Alexandria the great pillar of the Church said in Greek, "Mia Physis Tou Theo Logou Sesarkoumeni," that is to say, "One Incarnate Nature of God the Logos."

The Christ Child came to bring peace to the earth. At His Birth the angels and the Heavenly Hosts praised God and said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men! (Luke 2:14) The world misunderstands what is the true meaning of peace. Some believe that peace is found in yoga meditation, or in listening to all sorts of music, or in just sitting alone away from people in a quiet place, or in using drugs, or in gambling or in having a so-called good time in partying and drinking alcohol.



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This is not the Christian understanding of peace. St. Paul the great apostle sums up the true meaning of peace by saying, “and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.” (Colossians 1:20) It was through the Incarnation of the Logos and His sacrifice on the cross that He reconciled the earthly with the heavenly. Christ through His Incarnation and death removed the barrier that was between man and God. St. Paul says about this, “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation.” (Ephesians 2:14) So then, true peace is reconciling with God. Our lives become troubled and fear and unrest enters our hearts when we sin and are separated from the Lord. When we repent, confess our sins and live a life of purity, then this heavy burden is lifted and we become united with Christ again and peace fills our hearts.

Those who have no relationship with the Lord, and reject Him cannot comprehend this peace of God. St. Paul explains this by saying, “and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7) Through the Incarnation, the Lord saw firsthand the turmoil and tribulations that the human race suffers on a daily basis due to their separation from Him and it was inevitable for Him to become Man in order to return peace to us. Truly by His Birth He removed darkness and the shadow of death from the earth and gave us hope of eternal life. Zacharias the priest said, “To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” (Luke 1:79)



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If you seek your peace and comfort in the world you will be miserable all your days. For the world's peace can be deceptive and it is perishing and only momentary. For some, they think that their peace is in their riches and wealth, in how many properties and cars that they own. Money and material goods is what they thrive on and in such things they think they are happy. This is indeed foolishness and grasping for the wind. As the wise Solomon says, " 'Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher; 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?" (Ecclesiastes 1:2-3) What profit is there in gaining the whole world and losing your own soul and your peace with Christ, it is indeed irrational and foolish.

Christ tells us plainly, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27) David the prophet had this faith in God and he was at peace and feared nothing. He said, "The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?... Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war may rise against me, in this I *will be* confident." (Psalm 27:1, 3) This is the carefree life, full of peace that the sons and daughters of God enjoy.

Who of us can guarantee their lives for one day or even an instant? St James says, "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." (James 4:14) Past events prove this to us, whether it be through natural disasters, modern martyrdom or even an accident our life cannot be predicted but it is in God's hands. The Lord comforts us by saying, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) He overcame the world and has given us the power through His Incarnation to resist sin in the world, be victorious, full of hope and peace.



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If we keep our minds and our hearts with the Lord and have strong faith trusting in the Lord then He will give us this perfect and unadulterated peace. Isaiah the prophet says, “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.” (Isaiah 26:3)

We pray today to the King of Peace to bestow His true peace upon the whole world, that wars may cease and humanity can live in harmony together. We pray for Egypt during this time of turmoil that the Lord’s peace can return to it. That Coptic Christians can live without the fear of persecution and discrimination and that full human rights will prevail for all Egyptians. We also pray for our holy father, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III and for the whole Church both clergy and laity that the Lord may keep them safe at all times. We also remember our recent martyrs, especially the 23 martyrs of The Two Martyrs Church in Alexandria one year ago and the 27 martyrs of Maspero. May the Lord repose their pure souls in the bosom of our holy fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

I leave you with these words from St Paul, “Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.” (2 Thessalonians 3:16)

Wishing you all a Feast full of the Lord’s peace and joy and I pray for each individual soul of this blessed diocese whom are very precious to me as I also ask for your prayers for my weakness.

With every blessing, be absolved through the Holy Spirit.

Suriel

Servant of the Christ-loving Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions

