



## PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF LOCAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

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### The Christmas Message of the Heads of Churches of Jerusalem

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John 1.14)*

We, the Heads of the Churches of Jerusalem, bring you greetings of joy, peace, hope and love from the Land of the Nativity: the Joy and the peace of God that were announced by the heavenly host of Angels in the sky of Bethlehem, the Hope of salvation made possible through the Incarnation of the Word, His Love that was fully embodied, revealed and incarnated through the Babe of Bethlehem.

This was the essence of the message of the incarnation, which descended from on high and revealed the very nature of the Divine, the Holy and the Transcendent. It is through the incarnation of the Word of God that heaven and earth were reconciled and wedded together; it is through the incarnation of the Word that heaven and earth were united and made one, because God has dwelt among God's people in flesh here on earth. We pray, with our Lord and Saviour, that the whole church may be one and Christians be united under the banner of the Prince of Peace.

Church Fathers taught us that the Word became human so that humans may become divine. Today, humans have the same challenge set before them, yet the only way to become divine is through becoming fully human, thus, human-becoming! This heavenly message is directed towards all of humanity, especially, where humanity is alienated from the divine presence from within, and is called to embody the Joy, Peace, Hope and Love of the Nativity and be able to share them with the whole world.

The message of Christmas is about bringing Joy to all those who mourn and grieve, and about bringing Peace to those who are oppressed and live under occupation and injustices. It is about bringing Hope to those who live without hope and are in despair, and about bringing Love where there is hatred and enmity, particularly to the unloved and the strangers. We especially hold up to God the children and those who are affected by violence and those who live as refugees, and for the end of intolerance, discrimination, and vandalism against all Holy Sites.

We pray at this time of our Christmas celebrations for the situations of conflict and distress throughout the Middle East. Especially, for the people of Syria and for the ending of violence and bloodshed. And here in the Holy Land, we pray that the "Two States" solution may bring peace, security, and reconciliation to both nations.

May there be peace in this region of the Middle East, and all people may see the love of God in face of the other. We hope and pray that all those in authority and their people may walk in the paths of peace and good will for the common good, thus our joy may be complete. Amen

- +Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Patriarch Fouad Twal, Latin Patriarchate
- + Archbishop Aris Shirvanyan, Locum Tenens of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, ofm, Custos of the Holy Land
- +Archbishop Anba Abraham, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem
- +Archbishop Swerios Malki Murad, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Joseph-Jules Zerey, Greek-Melkite-Catholic Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Abouna Matthias, Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Mosa El-Hage, Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate
- +Bishop Suheil Dawani, Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East
- +Bishop Munib Younan, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
- +Bishop Pierre Malki, Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate
- +Bishop Joseph Antoine Kelekian, Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate

(Christmas, 2012)