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SYRIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE  
OF ANTIOCH & ALL THE EAST  
BAB TOUMA, P.O.BOX 22260  
DAMASCUS - SYRIA



ܒܒ ܬܘܡܐ - ص.ب ٢٢٢٦٠  
ܕܡܫܩ - سورية

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Christmas 2018

**By the Grace of God  
Ignatius Aphrem II  
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East  
Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church**



**Our Beloved Spiritual Children,  
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.**

**Who has ever seen a Child the whole of Whom beholds every place? He looks like the one Who controls all creatures that are above and that are below! His eyes stare resembles that of a commander who commands all. (Mor Aphrem, Hymns on the Nativity)**

Christmas season is a time to declare once again our faith in the One Almighty God, Creator of heavens and earth, and Governor of the entire universe, Who was born of a Virgin in Bethlehem. It is a time to experience the love of the Holy Trinity and to perceive with awe the mystery of incarnation. Moreover, it is a time to repent and meditate on the Son Who became flesh and "Who by His grace, willingly came to give life and salvation to all mankind" (Ma'nitho of Mor Severus of Antioch), and hence allow that same grace to work in our lives and to bring into our world joy and peace.

It is also an opportunity for us to marvel at the glorious scene of the nativity, and ponder at the Baby King, laid in a simple manger while at the same time He continues to carry and embrace the whole universe. In a beautiful prayer we



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Dearly beloved,

This is Christmas; a time to know how much God loved the world that He gave up His glory, humbled Himself and was born in our midst. It is a time to cast out fear and have complete faith that God is in control of everything. It is a time to unite in prayer for our world, and ask the Baby born, King of kings and Prince of peace to bring peace back to our countries, societies, families and lives, and to inspire the earthly rulers to bring justice and love to the world, putting an end to the misery of millions who are suffering from injustice, violence and war throughout the world, especially in our beloved Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and the entire Middle East.

Christmas is a time to ask Him the gift of sharing His grace and the good news of His incarnation with the abandoned, marginalized, persecuted and poor. It is a time to cry out with one voice: "Thy Kingdom come" (cf. Matthew 6: 10), and beseech Him to come and reign over our hearts and fulfill His promise that "indeed, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21) and make us free indeed (cf. John 8:36), free from sin and worldliness, and free to submit our lives to Him. We pray for our beloved abducted Archbishops of Aleppo Boulos Yaziji and Mor Gregorius Youhanna Ibrahim: may they return to their Archdioceses and celebrate Christmas with joy and peace.

May our Lord continue to govern our world and lead it to the manger of peace. May He bless the faithful of the Syriac Orthodox Church throughout the world on this blessed occasion of Christmas and the New Year.