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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 Children in Christ,
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

“Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh”
(1 Timothy 3: 16)

By transgressing the commandment of God, the sentence of death was imposed on all. However, because “God is love” (1 John 4: 8), He did not wish to keep man separated from Him. By His great mercy, He promised to send His only begotten Son to redeem the world. Thus, humanity waited eagerly for the promised salvation.

The prophecies were fulfilled at the birth of the savior, which resulted in the redemption which will restore the image of man to its initial glory.

Hence a great mystery: God was revealed in the flesh, i.e. He became man. He became Emanuel – God is with us. The misery was replaced with great joy, for unto it “is born this day in the city of David, a savior which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2: 11).

How great is this birth which reveals the love of God to the human race and His complete closeness to us. Through His humility, He descended to the human level. He emptied Himself and became flesh to save us from death. Through His incarnation, He became united with our humanity to redeem it from death.



By His birth, God renewed His presence among us, for “the Word became flesh and dwelled among us” (John 1: 14). Consequently, He eliminated the darkness which was surrounding our lives and leading people to despair. Indeed, the presence of God among us shatters fear, sadness and despair, and ushers peace, joy and hope. In our world today, we desperately need to experience the presence of God among us so that we are encouraged and are able to regain joy.

On this joyous occasion of Christmas, let us renew in our hearts the confidence that God is among us and let us seek Him so that His light shines in our lives and we may find salvation from the pandemics, conflicts and wars that surround us, for the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnated God, is the light, hope, and source of all good gifts in our lives. In the midst of the great challenges that cause major economic crises in our world today, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic which continues to spread alarmingly, we contemplate Christ Who accepted to be born in the darkness of the night so that He can bring us to light. We beseech Him to enlighten our lives the way He enlightened with His birth the dark night of the shepherds in Bethlehem. May the darkness of ignorance, sin and death be scattered away and turned into light, knowledge, grace and life.

Therefore, dearly beloved, “without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3: 16). God is not away or a concealed secret anymore; rather, He is revealed to humanity and gives us salvation and life. The great doctor of the Church St. Jacob of Saroug declared this saying:

«أَوْزًا بِهِ وَدَا وَمُصَفِّدًا بِهِ مَا كُنَّا نَرَاهُ لَمْ نَرَهُ لَكُنَّا نَحْتَسِبُهُ»

“A great mystery which was hidden from the creatures, the Father decided to reveal Him in the flesh for the people”.

Hence, we believe that we are not alone, but “God is with us” (Isaiah 7: 14). The calamities and troubles of this world will not overcome us, because we rejoice despite our pain and suffering for hope fills our lives.

In this Christmas season, we offer you our prayers and best wishes, asking the Lord to bless you all and grant you joy, peace, hope and prosperity. May this new year 2022 be full of blessings and good health to all.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.