

Message of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, for Christmas 2024



Glory in the highest to God in Trinity,
through Whom His goodwill is revealed to men,
that as the friend of man
He may deliver Adam from the ancestral curse.
(Troparion of the Sixth Hour of Christmas Eve)

This joyful message of the redemption of the human race is experienced during the holy days of the Twelve Days of Christmas, particularly on this most solemn night, as the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ proclaims to its faithful and announces to the whole world.

It offers glory, thanksgiving, and praise to the Triune God in the highest, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, for His benefaction to the human race. Through the granted forgiveness and redemption from the curse, namely the curse pronounced upon man because of the fall and transgression of the First Father, one man's sin brought darkness, confusion, decay, and death, which prevailed over all mankind.

Man, as exiled from Paradise, became a plaything of the devil's power, being dragged by him into works of corruption, unable to gaze upon the face of his Creator.

From this painful fallen condition, God's immeasurable love raised man. Acting out of love, God the Father, "being in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19), "when the fullness of time was come," sent His Son into the world, made of a woman, made under the law, "that He might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:5). The Son and Word of God, "being God by nature, took upon Himself a truly human form" (as the Church chants, "You have assumed me entirely, whole and united, without confusion"). God dwelt in the world "with those exiled from His grace" and, according to Saint Cyril of Alexandria, "He became one with them", "He was incarnate, He became man." As the Evangelist John says, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), and as the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea dogmatically affirmed, whose 1,700th anniversary the Church celebrates this year, confessing in the Nicene Creed, "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man."

This extraordinary mystery was visibly revealed to men in Bethlehem, "the not-the-least among the rulers of Judah," and in this humble and blessed cave, under Caesar Augustus, when, according to the Evangelist Luke, "the Virgin brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger" (Luke 2:7). Through this infant Son, born in the flesh and laid in a manger, God called the wise men by a star, "as the first-fruits of the Gentile Church," who, having come, offered gifts and, falling down, worshiped, "for they saw the infant in the cave lying, the One without beginning". Similarly, He also called "shepherds keeping watch in the fields" "through a host of angels from heaven, singing, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men'" (Luke 2:13-14).

This work of bringing peace on earth as the goodwill of the Father was fulfilled by the Incarnate Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, throughout the entire time of His earthly Providence. He proclaimed repentance, healed the sick, raised the dead, called twelve disciples, and granted forgiveness of sins through the shedding of His blood on the Cross. Through His Resurrection from the dead, He raised mankind. Through His Ascension, He took up "the human nature," that is, the whole humanity He had assumed, and sat at the right hand of the Father, and "deified" it, as Gregory the Theologian says, "Through the Incarnation of God, man was deified" (PG 37,180A). He sent the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to His disciples,

thereby establishing the Church in the world through them, which He acquired with His precious blood.

Since the first Pentecost, the Church continues to perpetuate throughout the world the sanctifying and redeeming work of its Founder. It preaches, baptizes, and sanctifies its members through the sacraments. It performs acts of philanthropy for all in need. It even practices love towards those who wage war against it.

The Church of Jerusalem, the Church of the Holy Places, the Mother of all Churches, from the venerable and God-receiving Grotto, from the manger, and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, makes supplication for the cessation of war in the Holy Land and the broader region of the Middle East. It prays for the protection of all the inhabitants of the Holy Land, the members of its flock, those suffering in Gaza, those taking refuge in the asylum of the Monastery of Saint Porphyrios, and the faithful pilgrims celebrating the feast of Christmas.

In the Holy City of Bethlehem, Christmas 2024.

THEOPHILOS III

[Patriarch of Jerusalem](#)

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