

21/12/2019

## **His Beatitude John X Patriarch of Antioch and all the East issues Nativity Pastoral Letter 2019**



**His Beatitude John X Patriarch of Antioch and all the East has released this year's Nativity Pastoral Letter. Read the full text below:**

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2019-12-20

With the mercy of God Almighty

**John X**

Patriarch of Antioch and all the East

to

My brothers, Pastors of the Holy Church of Antioch

My sons and daughters, all over this Apostolic See

*Make merry, O heaven and earth, as the Prophets foretold!*

*Celebrate in the spirit, O Angels and men! God is born from a woman and appears in the flesh*

*to those who sit in darkness and shadow. A cave and a manger welcome Him. Shepherds announce the wonder. Wise men from the East offer gifts in Bethlehem. Let us from our unworthy lips offer praise like the Angels: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace!"*

*The Expectation of the Nations has come. He has come and saved us from bondage to the Enemy*[\[1\]](#).

On the glorious feast of Nativity, the Church contemplates that meek Child, Jesus Christ, Who has visited and still visits the world of our heart, as much as we open for him the manger of our soul. On this feast, the hymnographer invites us to become one choir with the angels. He calls us to celebrate the feast in the Spirit, "because God appeared in the flesh, for those in darkness and shadow." Today, our Glorious Christ, comes near everyone who tarries in the shadows and darkness and says to him: For your sake, my most beloved creation, I became a child in the flesh, I, the eternal God who exists before the ages. I am not ashamed of you, nor of your weaknesses. It is out of my love for you that I came, so that I may relieve your heart, take away your distress and put it on my shoulders. Today the Lord comes to remove from the hearts and souls the worries of the world and to throw them in the darkness of the cave.

In the times of Jesus Christ, people awaited the Redeemer to come to them as a mighty and powerful king, who would overthrow mighty thrones and wipe out injustice from the whole world. They expected him as an earthly tyrant, with visible glory. They awaited a savior who would choose a nation, but they found in him a savior for all humankind, extending his mercies to all. They expected him to come in a royal palace, but he was brought them in a cave. They expected the splendor of a throne, and were surprised by the humble manger. They awaited a glorious king, and saw a meek child. They expected him to come on the clouds of heaven, to establish an earthly kingdom, so rushed to them on the straw of the manger, to establish his kingdom in souls thirsty for his Spirit. They waited for him surrounded by a terrestrial guard, so he took them aback with a celestial army. They wanted

him to be surrounded by an ephemeral prestige, with might and youth, so he was surrounded by Mary's meekness, Joseph's hesitation, and the smile of a child. At His Nativity, the Divine Child brings together the earthly with the heavenly, to proclaim his glory in the highest, a real peace on earth and a goodwill in the hearts of all people.

At this time, we light our candles before the manger of Love Who visited our world. We long for the divine child who loved all of us and came as comfort and reassurance amid our turbulent lives. We raise our eyes towards Him, praying for the peace of the world and "steadfastness of God's holy churches." We look at him, praying for the good and stability of this Levant.

**We pray for peace in Syria and for stability in Lebanon, calling everyone to be inspired by the calm and peace of the Child in the cave, as we face of the difficulties that beset this Levant and its people. Peace of thought and soul is the first brick that builds nations. In much of what is going on around us, peace of the soul is our fundamental need as the first building block for peace in our country. We need to be reconciled with ourselves as a building block for reconciliation with others, the ones with whom we and by whom we build with the peace for society and resurrection for the nation.**

**Today, we pray for the return of all the kidnapped people. Our prayers are lifted for our two brethren, Bishops John Ibrahim and Paul Yaziji, the Prelates of Aleppo, who have been kidnapped for nearly seven years. We ask the newborn child to illuminate the night of their exile, to enlighten the minds of their beloved ones, and may our prayers be answered seeing them among us despite all this media and global concealment of their case, which remains only a sample of what our families, our people, and every ethnical and religious group are going through, in violation of human dignity to be sold in the market of global interests.**

**We pray for this Levant, for all its countries and for the wounded Palestine, whose cause remains with all the occupied lands, the false scar in the forehead of truth, which is above time, authority, conspiracy or recognition.**

With the peace of Nativity, we address these words to you, Our Antiochian sons in the homeland and the countries abroad, in the whole world. May God bless you all, with your children and relatives. We lift our prayer to the Lord Almighty for the sake of our brothers and beloved ones who preceded us in hope of resurrection and

eternal life and for peace and Godspeed in the whole world.

In the present feast, we hope that each human being makes their heart a cave to receive the King of glory and lets themselves become a manger where Christ can rest to sanctify their being. We pray the Virgin Mary so that the present feast brings about a glimpse of the abundance of the calm and peace from the Lord of Peace, to Him be glory and praise forever, Amen.

From our Patriarchate in Damascus

December 20, 2019

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— Source: [antiochpatriarchate.org](http://antiochpatriarchate.org)