

## **Patriarch of Antioch and All the East - By 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

“See the Lord of Heaven and Earth

Let your eyes Behold him here

Offer him as gifts their gold

With the incense and the myrrh”

In the night of the present times, here comes the Child in the cave as a Ray of light that darkness cannot overcome. He comes to us in days where the whole humanity moans under the yoke of the pandemic and looks up to the Master of hope that He may remove with His “easy yoke” all its burdens. Christ God comes to us, born in

the flesh, to open a breach in time and look upon His world with love and peace. He comes like a meek smile amid this world's tumult. He comes as a truthful consolation. He comes as a Child Who could not find a place on the couches of thrones, and so He chose the womb of the Virgin as His throne. Some people on earth awaited Him as an earthly king, but He came as the First and the Last, touching the misery of those whom He had fashioned while embracing it with His meekness. Some people had been awaiting Him as One who comes to save one people. However, He came and took all humankind in His arms, and has been doing so at all times, since Adam. He comes today as a little child in the heart of the cave. We were starving for His mercies, so He came, and still comes at all times, to roll away the heavy stone that oppressed the heart of humankind and to plant in the cave of human hearts a sparkle of light and hope.

On Christmas Day, humanity, through the Magi, the kings of the East presented to the Newborn Christ gold, myrrh, and frankincense. Today, we are called to welcome the Child in the cave with the gold, frankincense, and myrrh that we give to our poor, worried, and displaced brother, whose face reflects the countenance of Jesus. Today, we are called to embody the gifts on Nativity in works of benevolence and charity that emanate the fragrance of satisfaction and gratitude before the Lord. Today, we are called to receive Him in our hearts that shine as pure as gold when they look at the neighbor in need. Thus, by their compassion, they attract the mercies of the Lord of Heaven, the Child of the cave. Today, we are called to receive Him and bury under His feet the myrrh and bitterness of our lives. We shall pour out our tearful prayers, asking for His mercy upon His world during this challenging pandemic. Today, we are called to remain faithful to Him as children through brotherly solidarity, interpreted as acts of charity towards the other brother.

On the eve of this present feast day, we all turn our hearts and minds towards the cave of Bethlehem. We stand next to that pure Mother, the Virgin Mary, who placed on the straw of a manger the One who is the Hope and Salvation of humankind. We join our prayers to hers. We ask the mercies of the Divine Child to the entire world. We ask Him for mercy to those who died in this pandemic. We ask Him, the Physician of souls and bodies, to accompany our brothers the doctors, and other medical and service personnel in facing this difficult circumstance. We ask Him to help and console the broken hearts and to lift this plight from His world. We ask Him, as He shines in the darkness of the cave, to send His light and consolation to all those caught up in tribulations. We ask Him peace for a world that is tossed in the tempest of violence and terrorism. We ask him for the land where He was born, for the wounded East and its heart, Palestine, with its people crucified on the sideway of the nations. We ask him for peace in Syria and stability in Lebanon and

every country and place in this East and this world.

As Antiochian Christians, we carry before Him our pledge to preserve the authenticity of our witness to Him and the Gospel. We carry before Him our pledge to always give an authentic witness to Him, a witness that has remained unwavering in these cruel days, despite the strife of the Eastern people who suffer displacement, the scourges of wars, kidnappings, difficult conditions, and the dismantlement of states and societies. We place before Him our pledge to remain in this eastern land, rooted as the Cedars in Lebanon, defying every hardship with His help and His strength that supports ours.

We remember in prayer our brothers the Prelates of Aleppo, Bishops John Ibrahim and Paul Yaziji, who are kidnapped since April 2013. We set before the whole world with its international and local organizations, their case, which is a mere sample of the ordeals that befall the people of this East. We pray for their release and their return with every kidnapped and missing person. The bitterness of the kidnapping is only aggravated by the bitterness of obscuring the file and leaving it for oblivion, or simply ignoring it, unfortunately even overlooking its very occurrence.

We pray for the Child in the cave to touch with His heart this wounded world and to hold in His tender embrace the souls of the departed, who preceded us towards His mercies, in the hope of resurrection and eternal life. We ask Him, at the beginning of the New Year, to grant peace to His world and mute with the power of His silence the noise and threat of wars.

With the praise of the angels, songs of the shepherds, the supplication of Mary, the joy of the Magi, the humbleness of the cave, and the brightness of souls as the star, we bow in worship before the Divine Love that has visited us two thousand years ago and is still visiting us now, asking the Lord of mercy and compassion to perpetuate His clemency on His world. We pray to Him for your sake and the sake of your kin, all of you my brethren and children of Antioch everywhere.

O God of peace and Father of mercies, grant us your Divine Peace that we may chant to you with all our hearts and tongues:

“Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill towards men.”

From our Patriarchate in Damascus

December 20, 2020

#John\_X

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