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His Beatitude John X, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, presided the New Year Eve liturgy



HB Patriarch John X at New Year's Divine Liturgy:

"Today we celebrate the feast with a heartache because of the kidnapped, all the kidnapped, including our brothers the Metropolitans of Aleppo, John Ibrahim and Paul Yazigi."

On January 1, 2021, His Beatitude John X, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, presided the New Year Eve liturgy at the Maryamiyya Cathedral in Damascus. Reverend Bishops Mousa al-Khoury, Ephraim Maalouli, and a group of clergymen concelebrated with him. At the Divine Liturgy, prayers were raised for peace in the world. In the end, His Beatitude gave a homily where he addressed the challenges faced by humankind due to the pandemic and the general world situation. He also pointed to the issue of the kidnapped Metropolitans of Aleppo, John Ibrahim and Paul Yazigi.

His Beatitude touched on the global situation in the face of the epidemic and said: "We open the New Year while the pandemic strikes from one end of the world to another. As it witnesses the horrible scenery, the bleeding humanity bows in the heart and being, supplicating the Lord of life and death to have compassion on His creation. Humanity bows in the heart before the present pandemic that came about to confirm that all humans are equal despite differences of religion, civilization, nationality, language, geography, gender, race, and color. Mankind is reeling before the pandemic that has passed, despite its bitterness, to say that we humans are all passengers of one boat, which God has placed amid the waves of the blue planet. The present pandemic has come to shake the conscience of those who forget or try to forget that we share somehow a single destiny on earth. The pandemic came to remind, despite all the bitterness, that human beings are called to compete in facing dangers of all kinds with solidarity, not to take arms, fight bitterly, and spread violence and terrorism. Mankind has packed the bellies of the earth with weapons of every kind and at times has mastered the craft of hiding behind ideologies to protect itself and interpreted all this as wars, strife, and conflicts that decay it.

We pray about the present pandemic, about which we pray to God to take pity on his creation and remove it quickly. We pray that it might be even at least a positive shock for humanity to recover from the logic of hostility to the logic of solidarity, from the logic of confrontation to the logic of meeting, from the logic of tyrannizing others to the logic of solidarity, from the logic of deifying the intellect that wants to pioneer everything to the logic of the creature acquiring reason before the majesty of the Creator, from the logic of running to take arms and destroy the other to the logic of acquiring the other as a weapon of solidarity to arise and face the good and evil of moments in the world with the peace of the Holy One and the sweetness of his benefaction."

Addressing the Syrian file, His Beatitude prayed for peace in Syria and added: "On New Year's Day, we pray for peace in Syria. We pray for Syria, which has been

suffering from a dire of war, the bitterness of displacement, terrorism, and violence. We pray for this country that is beset by others' interests and pays out of the lives of its children in poverty, misery, and economic blockade. We pray for the bereaved mother, for the brother and the father who are distressed by losing their beloved ones who are overwhelmed by the cruelty of the present time. We pray that this land may be united. We pray and work to alleviate the impact of the devastation that soon appears in the form of bitter emigration. Syria longs for its days of peace. It is her right and the right of its people to live safely in the land of their ancestors. We pray for Syria to return, and by God's will, it shall return to its previous peace. We call on the international community to immediately cease the economic sanctions and the sinful economic blockade that only targets a people who wants to live in dignity."

As for Lebanon, His Beatitude called for the formation of a government, saying:

"On New Year's Day, we pray for Lebanon and its stability. We pray for our people in Lebanon who are overcome by the financial crisis and the weight of the Beirut port explosion. We call for the formation of the Lebanese government expediently, as stipulated in the constitution, far from the logic of quotas and division, at least out of compassion for the human being who is crushed by the specter and fact of the collapsing national currency. Everyone is waiting, especially the families and relatives of the deceased and affected victims of the explosion, for the results of the Beirut port case and the economic file investigations in general. They are in full right to do so. Hence, the judiciary and other relevant authorities play an essential role, away from politicization and retaliation mentality, in revealing the circumstances of what happened, whether in the port or the public funds, and in applying the logic of equal accountability.

His Beatitude also tackled the file of the kidnapped, saying:

"Today we celebrate the Nativity with heartache because of the kidnapped, all the kidnapped, including our brothers the Metropolitans of Aleppo, John Ibrahim and Paul Yazigi, who have been kidnapped since April 2013, amid an international condemnable and unacceptable silence. We all pray that this file may be revealed and reach its desired results. We join our hearts to the beloved parish in Aleppo, for it awaits a word of hope regarding its two bishops, who were only an emblem of peace and reconciliation in the roaring voices of resentment and wars."