



COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH  
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## His Grace Bishop Daniel - Christmas Message 2024

6TH JANUARY 2024

To the reverend fathers the priests, deacons, servants, the congregation of the Diocese of Sydney, and all friends, may the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. With heartfelt sentiments, I wish you a Happy New Year and a blessed Christmas, illuminated by the intercessions of Saint Mary, the prayers of the saints, and under the spiritual guidance of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark. May God continue to bless him with many more years of peaceful leadership.

In these challenging times, marked by wars and unrest in various parts of the world, I am compelled to share some reflections on the precious gift of peace.

The essence of Christmas peace is encapsulated in the figure of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, the 'Prince of Peace,' as foretold by Isaiah: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). This message of peace was echoed by the angels during Jesus' birth: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests" (Luke 2:14). Remarkably, this peace was initiated by the Lord Himself, signified by the angelic announcement to Saint Mary of the birth of Christ, a pivotal moment of the Christmas narrative.

Peace is a divine gift, bestowed upon God's children through the ministrations of the priesthood. The Old Testament recounts how priests imparted blessings of peace, as encapsulated in the words: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:22-23,26). Furthermore, priests are instrumental in fostering reconciliation between humanity and God, as expressed in: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

As we ponder the current state of peace in the world, Christmas reminds us that there is a divinely ordained time for everything, including peace: "A time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace" (Ecclesiastes 3:8).

This Christmas, let us commit to walking in righteousness and finding favour with God: "When the Lord takes pleasure in anyone's way, he causes their enemies to make peace with them" (Proverbs 16:7). Adhering to the Lord's teachings and commandments leads us toward peace: "If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, I will grant peace in the land, and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid" (Leviticus 26:3,6). Overcoming sin is essential for inner peace, as exemplified: "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it" (Genesis 4:7). The biblical narrative of Abigail and King David illustrates the efficacy of mediation in conflict resolution: "'Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request'" (1 Samuel 25:35). Additionally, wise counsel and negotiation are vital components of peacebuilding, fostering joy and harmony: "Deceit is in the hearts of those who plot evil, but those who promote peace have joy" (Proverbs 12:20).

As we celebrate this sacred season and navigate these complex times, let us meditate on these teachings and endeavour to be ambassadors of peace within our communities. Wishing you all a safe, joyous, and serene Christmas.

Stay safe, and Merry Christmas to everyone.

Please keep me in your prayers.

+Daniel