

Antiochian Orthodox
Christian Archdiocese
of the British Isles and
Ireland



الأبرشية الإنطاكية
المسيحية الأرثوذكسية
للجزر البريطانية و إيرلندا

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Archbishop: His Eminence, Metropolitan Silouan Oner

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"Do Not be Afraid"

Matthew 10:28

This was the Lord Jesus Christ's commandment for his disciples during difficult times, and we also need to follow these words in today's unprecedented times.

The Lord Jesus came into this world silently, without any appearance of celebration. He came into this world humbly and selflessly, welcomed only by poor shepherds and foreign Magi.

As reflected in the scriptures, Jesus was born in Nazareth to a poor mother (Matthew 2:6). Nazareth was the least among the rulers of Judah, and people questioned if anything good could come out of that place. He was called a Nazarene (John 1:46).

He ran from Herod, however, Herod's life was in his hand

Even though He is the shepherd of shepherds, he still humbly needed the care of a mother. His humility shamed those who were proud and proved to everyone that it is not the place that glorifies man, but man is the one who glorifies the place, and true greatness only originates from within.

At the core, the story of the birth of Christ reveals a story of love.

God loved this sinful world, oppressed by Satan, defeated by sin, and incapable of seeking His salvation. Overwhelmed by sin, the world had become blind to Him and, therefore, had truly become a lost world.

Amazingly, God did not come to judge this sinful world but to save it from its sufferings and give it life. He did not come to sentence us but to deliver us from judgment. Out of His love for us, He found us under the judgment of death and so took our place and died for us. As we go through many difficulties in our lives, we can be confident that in the end, the victory will be for the Lord. He will help us at the appropriate time to overcome difficulties. With Him, victory will be ours provided that we stay near to Him and never doubt Him, His wisdom, or His timing.

These difficult times can shake our faith in the Lord and His power, but we must firmly adhere to our faith and not let coldness and apathy enter it. Personal home prayer, adherence to the Bible, and reading spiritual books will help strengthen one's faith.

The Word became flesh in order to give us a better life or, rather, to restore us to Himself in His incarnation. We are to live in Christ, to be born with Him, to be crucified, and to be buried with Him in order to rise with Him.

Therefore, let us celebrate, not in a worldly way but in a spiritual way. This year has been challenging. Let us focus on His gift of love and not the extravagant decorations, festivities, and worldly music.

Christianity is a path of life that does not end with distress or disease. We must follow the path, whatever the circumstances, with faith in and reliance on the Lord. We must live in this world looking forward with hope because, in the end, Christ will prevail with those who remain with Him.

For many, Christmas is celebrated with a tree, decorations, food, and gifts; for others, it is the birth of the Saviour of this world. We believe in the Christ child who came to this suffering world to grant us salvation. "He came to preach to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, and call out to the captives to be freed" (Isaiah 61:1). Jesus did not come as a mighty God to be feared, but rather a tender Father with open arms, a God who would save us from our sins and wipe every tear from our eyes. Let us focus on our salvation because it is the goal of His birth. If you need salvation, ask the divine Child to deliver you from your sinful ways and imperfections. Ask Him to sanctify and save you with His compassion and to wash you so that you become whiter than snow. We must not miss this goal but always strive to achieve it.

What will Christ see when He comes this year on His birthday? He will see diseases, wars, despair, atheism, and family disintegration. As for you, let Him see that you also have faith, love, inner joy, hope, and trust in Him for a better future. Let us strive to spread this faith in the world, ask for its salvation, minister to our brothers and sisters, and help those who have no help. Sharing the faith is how His birth will be fulfilled in us while leaving us with love and peace.

My brothers and sisters, dear ones, Christmas this year is mixed with pain and sickness. Let us all turn it into good.

I hope that Christ, born in a cave, will give us the faith necessary to face these difficult times. Had it not been that the Lord loved us and had compassion on us, this plague would have been even greater. It is His mercy and love that protects us from the greatest evil. His mercy reveals our shortcomings and teaches us to repent and turn away from our sins.

I wish you a Merry Christmas, and may the Divine Child give us all joy, reassurance, and hope for all the peoples of the Earth.

Jesus came to this world as a child and gave us peace and love. On the day of His birth, we should contemplate the depth of His love for us and how He came to this world for us, to save us from our darkness and give us His glorious light. Amen.

+ Silouan, Metropolitan of the British Isles and Ireland



Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East