



English

The Papal Encyclical for the Glorious Feast of Nativity 2016

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.

Happy New Year and Merry Christmas. I congratulate you for the glorious birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Celebrating Christmas as celebrated by the whole world on December 25th is extended through the beginning of the calendar year and then celebrated by us according to the Eastern Coptic calendar on January 7th. Christmas is a renewal of our joy and happiness. In the story of Christmas, we see many events and figures but I would like to point out two events.

The wise men came from a distant land, followed the star until they came to Bethlehem, worshipped the baby, and then offered their gifts. This was the end of their trip. On the opposite end, the shepherds saw the angel who gave them the good news. They came to the manger and saw the baby Jesus with His mother, and this was the beginning of their trip. One group was the end, and the other group was the beginning. The beginning of joy was accomplished by the name of "Emmanuel, God is with us." That is why we became glad. In a few words I would like to meditate with you about one of the main objectives of the Birth of Christ, that is, giving joy to mankind. All details and figures of the story are provided to give happiness and joy. We praise with the angels saying: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:14). The phrase "goodwill toward men" means happiness and joy to mankind. Our Lord Jesus Christ came to give joy to every heart. The question now is: What are the elements of giving joy? Let me talk with you about the elements of joy.

1- The 1st element of joy in the Nativity is the Virgin St. Mary. She gladdened us with her righteousness and purity. No person can gladden others unless he or she is righteous and pure. There is no way good fruit will come out of a bad tree. People's joy comes through those who are pure, righteous, and pious.

2- The 2nd element is the Magi (wise men). They gladdened us by their visit and gifts. When they came to offer their gifts they made us happy. People can gladden others through visitations and courtesy. According to the Biblical command: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). Offering our materialistic or emotional gifts, such as words and smiles, is the most precious and most easily available gift.

3- The 3rd element is the shepherds. They gladdened us because they were watchful and honest. They were simple people working in the desert and taking care of their sheep. They saw the angel who brought them the great news. They came with haste and faithfulness. People can gladden others through their faithfulness and loyalty. A faithful life will always give happiness to others and gladden God, as the scripture says: "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelations 2:10).

4- The 4th element that gladdened humanity in the story of the Nativity is the village Bethlehem. It was a very small village, not aforementioned, but one that gave us joy as it became a shelter for St. Mary and the little Child, our Lord Jesus Christ. People can gladden others when they provide them shelters, as the Bible says: "I was a stranger and you took Me in" (Matthew 25:35). Everyone should provide shelters for the needy, the poor, and the less fortunate. The orphans, the elder, the handicapped, and all needy should be provided shelters, as was the case in Bethlehem. Now Bethlehem is mentioned on every tongue as it provided shelter for our Lord Jesus Christ. It should take pride in this.

5- The 5th element that provided happiness to people is the angels who appeared and sang this praise: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:14). This verse became a joyful and beloved sign, and a voice for the angels. People can gladden others through their prayers, worship, and praise. Joyful worship gladdens others.

The story of the Nativity and Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ is for our salvation. It is so unique that our Christ would provide the answer to the question, "How do we gladden others?" You may meditate on the details of this event to find more figures and spiritual exercises on how to gladden others.

In the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, I congratulate all our Coptic Orthodox Churches, all bishops and priests, the fathers the monks, and the mothers the nuns. I congratulate all Christian people, all boards of churches, all servants, all youth, all children, and all families. I congratulate all of you on behalf of the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Holy Synod, and all organizations in Egypt. I congratulate you, my beloved children, and wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year. May Christ bless your lives with all goodness, joy, love, and peace. Glory be to God, Amen.

Samadras II

