

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
His Holiness Pope Tawadros II
Pope of Alexandria and
Patriarch of the See of St. Mark
The Papal Center



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English – Nativity 2026

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

Happy New Year and A Glorious Feast of Nativity.

I am pleased to share this Nativity message with you for the new year 2026. First, I would like to congratulate you all on the glorious Feast of Nativity. I congratulate you and all our Coptic churches throughout the world. I congratulate all the Coptic dioceses in every continent: in Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America, and Australia. I congratulate all the families, the youth, and all the deacons, As well as all the fathers; the priests, the metropolitans and the bishops.

Each year, on the glorious feast of Nativity, we reflect on its meaning. Among the well-known human experiences in life is the giving of gifts. Indeed, the events of the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Incarnation in Bethlehem present us with a new understanding of the concept of a gift. A gift is a human and social act, recognized by all. Gifts vary between material gifts, moral gifts, tangible gifts, and verbal gifts such as poetry and praise, and so on. In the Nativity story, we encounter three types of gifts: the gift of joy, the gift of covering, and the gift of love. We view these three gifts in the various events of the Nativity.

Regarding the gift of joy, we first see the star, which some fathers said was not an ordinary astronomical star, but rather “an angel” according to Saint John Chrysostom. The star was a sign in the sky. (Matthew 2: 2) This sign was a gift not to individuals, but to nations. The nations from which the Magi came, who were wise men and interested in astronomy, astronomical calculations, and the calculation of days. The star was a guiding and leading star, moving with the Magi until it settled above the manger in Bethlehem. It was a gift from heaven, a gift of joy.

I want you to imagine with me how the Magi were traveling, contemplating on the star. Of course, in those days, the roads were very limited. There was no GPS, paved roads,

airplanes, or cars. The star was the hero of the show. It was a gift from heaven to these Magi, not only for them but for all their people.

Among the gifts of joy that heaven offered in the Nativity story were the angels. In their joy, the angels rejoiced and sang a timeless hymn that we still pray in the liturgy and still remember. Every time we celebrate the Nativity, we remember this hymn: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." (Luke 2:14) This is a gift. It is not just a verse or a hymn, but in modern language, we call it a roadmap. Human beings should give glory to God, spread peace on earth, and be a source of joy for all those around them. This is a gift. A gift of joy through the angels who sang with great joy.

Another gift of joy was the angel who illuminated the darkness of the night and enlightened the shepherds. He began to tell them about the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, in those days, there were no radios, televisions, or social media, nothing of that sort. But the angel was a joyful messenger, delivering a message of joy: "Today in Bethlehem a Savior has been born to you" (Luke 2:11). It was a message of joy for people who were awake all night in the wilderness. These are all gifts of joy that heaven gave us.

The second type of gifts are those of covering. The word "covering" is a powerful human word and a virtue. When we pray, every time we say, "Thank you, Lord, for You have covered us," referring to divine protection. Covering is a very great virtue in a person's life. Blessed is the person who covers their brother or sister, who covers others in their home, in their community, in their service, in their church, and in their country. Covering is a grace and a gift that heaven has given us. Where do we see it? The first place we see it is in the manger. Imagine Saint Joseph the carpenter, advanced in age, an old man, with the young Virgin Mary, who is pregnant and in the final days of her pregnancy. They couldn't find a place for her to give birth to the Child. They went to many places in Bethlehem, and they passed by all the houses, but there was no room. But there was the owner of the manger, and the manger itself was a gift of covering for this woman who was about to give birth. The manger covered the childbirth of our Mother the Virgin and a shelter for the little Child. He covered this small family consisting of Saint Joseph the carpenter, as the guardian of the mystery of the Incarnation, and this maiden in labor, who was young in age and exhausted. Medical care as we know today did not exist then. All this while she was also far from her home, but the manger provided them with covering. Not only this, but night was also a covering — the very night in which our Lord Jesus Christ was born, was a silent night. This silence and darkness in general provided covering. This silence allowed everything to be observed clearly as the light shown from heaven, whether with the angels or with the angel who announced the news to the shepherds.

Also, as part of this covering, there is a beautiful detail: when the Virgin Mary gave birth in the manger, there were swaddling clothes, small clothes to wrap the newborn in. (Luke 2:12). Where did these come from? Perhaps the owner of the manger provided them. Or perhaps they were with our Mother the Virgin. That's not the question, but these swaddling clothes also provided covering. This little Baby was covered, having been born in the cold of the night and the chilly weather at that time. Let us not forget that covering is of great value and virtue.

The third gift that heaven gave us is a human gift, the gift of love. I mentioned the gift of joy, the gift of covering, and the gift of love. And the gift of love, as we all know, has many forms, and these forms vary in how gifts are given as an expression of love. The first gift that heaven gave us is our Mother, the Virgin Mary, the chosen one, the beautiful dove, and the pride of our race. Our Mother, the Virgin Mary, whom God chose to be the passage for the Incarnation of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Mother, the Virgin Mary, was a gift among humanity. That is why we say that she is the pride of our race. And we say of her womb, which carried the Lord Jesus Christ, that it was the divine workshop through which Christ became incarnate, and divinity united with humanity.

Among the gifts of love are also those offered by the Magi. The Magi were scholars, rich, and philosophers. When the Magi came to visit the King, the King of the Jews, they brought gifts with them. They offered gifts that were perhaps new to the Jewish society: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2: 11). These gifts, in their entirety, were an expression of the love these men had for this little Child. Gold signifies a great King, frankincense signifies a great Priest, and myrrh signifies One who suffers, a Bearer of the cross, a Great One. The gifts were not only from the Magi, but also from the shepherds who were keeping watch in the open fields. "Keeping watch" means sitting in the wilderness at night, staying awake to guard their flocks. These shepherds were full of praise, and their praise was a gift that expressed the love they carried in their hearts.

In conclusion, the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ is a human message that offers us a social concept by which we live: the exchange of gifts. You choose a gift to give to someone you love on many occasions. The gift is set by the person giving it and the person receiving it. Your gift should be useful, beneficial, and beautiful. It doesn't have to be expensive, but it can be meaningful. A simple gift can be most expressive. One of the beautiful gifts we give each other, especially to our young sons and daughters, is the Holy Bible in its many forms: with colorful pictures, in large print, and in audio versions, with mobile applications that allow them to use it, watch it, and immerse themselves in the world of the Bible. The gift of the Bible is a very useful gift; this is just a small example. But the message of the Nativity that I would like to convey to you on this glorious feast is the understanding of a gift that can express joy, express covering, and express love.

I congratulate you, beloved. I congratulate all our churches, all our Coptic Orthodox dioceses, and I convey to you great love from the heart of Egypt, from Cairo, from St. Mark's Cathedral in Abbasiyya, where the shrine of Saint Mark the Apostle is located. I congratulate you all and wish you in this new year all the best, all peace, all health, all joy, all covering, and all love. My greetings to everyone, young and old, and to all the Coptic dioceses throughout the world. To all the beloved fathers, and to all male and female servants in each church and every diocese May God be with you.

Happy new year to you, and a glorious Feast of the Nativity.

Pawlos II