



# APOSTOLIC VICARIATE OF NORTHERN ARABIA

BAHRAIN . KUWAIT . QATAR . SAUDI ARABIA

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Date: .....

## CHRISTMAS 2023

### "The Word became flesh"

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Christmas time and the joy that surrounds it grace us anew. Yes, the Savior is born and "dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). We share our God's love for humanity and the hope of a new world --- we are already living in the promised Kingdom of God and the Trinitarian communion.

#### **NATIVITY OF THE LORD**

More than a birthday, Christmas is a Nativity. This is to show us the importance of Christ's birth and its universal dimension. It tells us about the mission and identity of this Child; it shows us our participation and involvement in this event.

If Christ indeed entered history by being born into our world, he turned the history of the world upside down. If he has trodden our soil, it was to make it a blessed land. If he wanted a human family, it was to sanctify our lives. We are blessed in Christ and loved by the Father. He gives us his Holy Spirit to live in communion and sanctify our flesh.

Christ's mission is clearly announced: to bring forgiveness and reconcile the world with God. This was accomplished according to the Father's plan, awakening our freedom and love. Beyond the forgiveness granted, there is a communion conceded.

The identity of Christ is clearly announced: the expected Messiah, the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:32), the eternal Word (John 1:1). These titles reflect an identity that surprises and consoles us. God remembered us and sent us His Son for our salvation.

#### **OUR NEW BIRTH IN CHRIST**

God has manifested Himself many times in the past. (Heb 1:1) His glory has shown itself and has overwhelmed men. We remember, for example, God's great deeds in Israel's history. Divine glory could not be seen, but it could be known and contemplated. At Christmas, the same glory is revealed and can be touched. The One who cannot be seen allows Himself to be seen. He who is spirit by essence becomes matter by love. The infinite enters the finite. Jesus reflects this glory through the incarnation, bringing Him within our reach to draw us back to the Father.

The sacred authors of the Old Testament are categorical: God is different, untouchable, unclassifiable, unattainable. Christmas is necessary in order to liberate the divine from these restrictive conceptions and



our attempts to confine it to norms. God cannot be confined in our idols, our temples, our sacred spaces. The God of Sinai is "the One who is" (Exodus 3:14). He is, however, "merciful, tender and slow to anger" (Ps 102:8), ready for the Covenant and relationships. He is unique and can be found (Isaiah 55:6). He reaches the right hearts and draws near. His glory is thus preserved but also shared.

The New Testament preserves the autonomy of the divine but also puts it within our reach. God is God, but that doesn't stop him from joining us in who we are. Man is man, but that does not mean that he is incapable of knowing God. God and man seek and find each other. One showing His divine glory, the other receiving his humanity through that glory.

Christmas shakes up our prejudices and confounds our minds. Divine glory is at hand. It is reflected in the Child of Bethlehem because He is the Son. God becomes incarnate and comes to touch us from within. Our flesh becomes the place of encounter and glory. The mystery of love chose this path to find us and bring us back to Him! Where the glory of God was unattainable and transcendent, here it becomes visible in the immanence of our lives and the limitations of our flesh.

What is the reason for incarnation? Should it be limited to the redemption of sins alone, as a result of original sin? It's a good reason. But there is another which wants to see in the incarnation the divine will to share His glory and love. It is the sanctification of the human to make him capable of the divine. And this is possible only in Christ, Man and God, the place of communion. The unique Person of the Son is the link that connects us to the Father through the Holy Spirit. Christmas is therefore the feast of the communion of opposites, but above all, of the possibility of communion. This is possible through the Son. It's possible for us as adopted sons and daughters. (Gal 4: 5) The unseemly glory became visible through the face of Christ. It is shared so that we may become "one in Christ" (Gal 3:28) in Trinitarian communion.

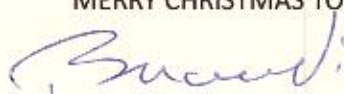
#### **JOY OF COMMUNION IN THE CHURCH**

This reason is a far cry from the commercial celebrations that have made Christmas a small event or that limit Christmas to a few futile and superficial revelries.

In Christmas, we confess our faith in the Son of God and our participation in divine love. We rejoice with believers of all ages and countries who celebrate Christmas with enthusiasm and joy. We commemorate the martyrs of Arabia who gave their lives to follow Christ and share in His glory. We unite ourselves with St. Mary, St. Joseph and all the saints of our history who believed and loved according to the Gospel. We sing with our families and our home churches. We celebrate in our Apostolic Vicariate, the Church in this region.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us celebrate Christmas as the most beautiful gift from Heaven for the greater glory of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ONE AND ALL!**



+ Aldo BERARDI, O.S.S.T.  
Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia

