



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Sydney & Affiliated Regions

Pastoral Message for the Glorious

Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

January 2016

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

To the beloved and blessed Fathers the Priests and my beloved Congregation of the Diocese of Sydney and its Affiliated Regions, Today we celebrate one of the most joyous occasions in the Coptic Orthodox Church "**The feast of Nativity of Jesus Christ**". I wish you, all goodness and peace and I pray to the Lord Jesus Christ that He grants you all a blessed feast and that He may fill your lives with true hope and all spiritual blessings.

Let us contemplate together the depth and meaning of this magnificent occasion:

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ- the Logos of God-, Incarnated to enable us to know God the Father.

1.1: In the past the Almighty God used to communicate with His people through His prophets by various ways, as we read in *Hebrews 1:1 New King James Version (NKJV)*, **1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets.**

Despite the above fact, humanity did not know the Lord their creator, as **St Athanasius¹ said** :{ what profit to the creatures if they knew not their Maker? Or how could they be rational without knowing the Word (The Reason) of the Father, in whom they received their very being? For there would be nothing to distinguish them even from brute creatures if they had knowledge of nothing but earthly things}.

St. Athanasius² also said: {God, who had the power over all things, when He was making the race through His Word, seeing the weakness of their nature, that it was not sufficient of itself to know it is Maker ... taking pity on the race of men, in as much as He is good, He did not leave them destitute of the knowledge of Himself ... He gives them a share in His own Image ... so that by such grace perceiving the Image, that is, the Word of the Father, they may be able through Him to get an idea of the Father, and knowing their Maker, live the happy and truly blessed life}.

¹ - *St. Athanasius: Incarnation of the Word, 11:2, P.42- Vol. 4 NPNF, 2nd Series*

² - *ibid. 11:1-3*

1.2: In the past also when the great prophet Moses asked God to show him His Glory, the answer was not expected, as we read in Exodus 33:18,20 New King James Version (NKJV),¹⁸ And he said, "Please, show me Your glory."²⁰ He (God) said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.

1.3: So, God the Father is unseen as we knew from the above point, however our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God was incarnated to declare the Father to us as we read in John 1:18 New King James Version (NKJV),¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son,^[a] who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. John shows us the closest possible union of Father and Son, as the Father's bosom indicates the essence of the Godhead in which the Son resides. One might also consider it as the hidden and secret place of God known only to the Son. The Son has come from the bosom of the Father to declare Him; this is not the first time such a declaration occurred, but it is the clearest and most complete revelation and given not only to the Jews but to the entire world.

1.4: Our Lord Jesus Christ emphasis the fact that He declare the Father to us, when He had this conversation with St. Philip as we read in John 14:7-11 New King James Version (NKJV),⁷ "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."

⁸ Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."

⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.¹¹ Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.

Christ reveals knowledge of the Father, who is invisible, through his own manifestations in the flesh. But it is not Christ's human nature that makes the Father known; rather, the Father is known through the evidence of the divine powers and authority Christ has. And while it is true that the disciples did know something of God, they did not yet know him as Father. Philip then asks to be shown the Father, not quite yet understanding how the Father is to be seen in the Son because he did not yet have the eyes of faith.

1.5: Again the scripture explain to us that God the Father spoken to us by His Son , as we read in Hebrews 1:2 New King James Version (NKJV),² (God the Father) has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.

1.6: Jesus Christ our Lord taught us that if we know Him, then we will know the Father also as we read in John 8:19,... If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also."

1.7: The knowing of the Father through the Son, is the Eternal Life as we read in [John 17:3](#) *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

ST CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA tells us that “ One who does not have the knowledge of good is wicked: for there is one good, the Father. And to be ignorant of the Father is death, just as to know him is eternal life, through participation in the power of the incorrupt One. And to be incorruptible is to participate in divinity.”

To be ignorant of the Father therefore is death, but to truly know him and the Son is eternal life because it brings us into participation with the divine in the Eucharist (ST CYRIL).

In this way, we are moved to worship of the Trinity, which, in turn leads ultimately to an eternal life spent contemplating the great “I am.” (ST AUGUSTINE).

Knowledge of God is eternal life, and the more we grow in his knowledge the greater the advances we make toward a life that most fully glorifies God. His name had already been glorified in heaven and by the worship of the angels, but this glorification was accomplished on earth when he came to serve humankind by doing the work that had been given him to do by the Father.

Dear congregation, let us know the teachings and the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us try to live by them, so that we can inherit the Eternal life.

My beloved children: May the blessings of the Holy Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you and dwell within you through the intercessions of the Ever Virgin the All-Holy Theotokos Saint Mary together with all the choirs of the saints, and through the prayers of the Father of Fathers, His Holiness Pope Tawadros the Second, the Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark, we ask the Lord to keep his life for us for many years and peaceful times.

We also pray that He the Lord and benefactor of all, may bless Australia, its people and its Government, and that the entire world including our motherland Egypt may prosper in His Name. May the Lord of all be with you all.

I wish you all happiness in this blessed feast of Nativity of our Lord God and Saviour.

God bless you all

Through the Grace of God

Bishop Daniel

Bishop of the Diocese of Sydney & Affiliated Regions

Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria.