



PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF THE CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

Christmas Message — 2025

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [Greek: *martyrōn*], let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith . . . (Hebrews 12:1–2a)*

During these continuing times of hardship and strife throughout our region, We, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem, remain resolute in proclaiming and affirming to both our communities and the faithful around the world the message of hope revealed in Christ's Incarnation and Holy Nativity in Bethlehem more than two millennia ago.

For in similarly difficult times, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to shepherds of that region, beseeching them to cast aside their fears. "For behold," said the angel, "I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10).

It was in kneeling before the manger in that sacred cave that the shepherds first witnessed God's gracious gift of love. They beheld "Immanuel," "God-with-us" (Matthew 1:23, Isaiah 7:14)—a divine Savior who "emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave, being born in human likeness" (Philippians 2:7).

In his great compassion for us, the Almighty deigned to take on our flesh and blood: to live among us and feel our pain; to later preach a message of repentance and God's redemption for all people; and to serve the downtrodden and afflicted before finally offering up his life on our behalf, that we might be raised with him to new life through faith in God's gracious act of love (Romans 6:4; Ephesians 2:6).

While this year we rejoice that a ceasefire has allowed many of our communities to more publicly celebrate the joys of Christmas, we nevertheless pay heed to the Prophet Jeremiah's warning against those saying "'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14). For we are fully aware that, despite a declared cessation of hostilities, hundreds have continued to be killed or suffer grievous injury. Many more have experienced violent assaults against themselves, their properties, and their freedoms—not only in the Holy Land, but also in neighboring countries.

We, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem, following in the example of our Lord in His Incarnation, continue to stand in solidarity with all those who are suffering and downcast, and we call upon Christians and others of goodwill around the world to persevere in praying and advocating for a true and just peace in the homeland of our Lord's birth—and, indeed, throughout the earth.

For those facing these afflictions, we recall from the Epistle to the Hebrews how many of the faithful over the centuries stood firm in faith through extreme hardships (Hebrews 11) and how Christ himself serves as the wellspring of our devotion to God (Hebrews 12:1–2a, above). We therefore encourage you to look to Him for your spiritual strength, even as the larger Body of Christ seeks to relieve your suffering and to strengthen you in your resolve to persevere in the Lord's work.

It is with these many sentiments that we extend our Christmas greetings to our congregations and to Christians around the world, wishing you and your loved ones the joy and peace that comes from encountering the boundless love of God made more fully manifest in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ in Bethlehem.

—The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem