

THE GLORIOUS  
**CHRISTMAS**

The Joy of Heaven and Earth



FR. TADROS Y. MALATY

Edited by:  
Dr. John Gabriel  
Monica E. Azer



THE GLORIOUS

# CHRISTMAS

The Joy of Heaven and Earth

**FR. TADROS Y. MALATY**

Edited by:  
**Dr. John Gabriel**  
**Monica E. Azer**



## Contents

- \* A Heavenly Surprise!
- \* God Is Joyfully Rejoicing Over You.
- \* The Second Adam and the New Paradise.
- \* Fasting before Christmas and Enjoying the Lord's Transfiguration.
- \* Enjoying the Right to Be God's Child.
- \* Ascending to Heaven.
- \* Enjoying the Coming of the Groom Himself.
- \* His Incarnation Expelled the Evil Beasts.
- \* What Do the Fathers Say About the Incarnation of the Word of God?

## A Heavenly Surprise!

There is no event in all of history that was more miraculously planned and more anticipated like the incarnation of the Word and His birth from the Virgin St. Mary. This event was in God's thought even before the world's creation, and He has revealed it to our first parents when they fell under sin. Subsequently, He sent the fathers (patriarchs, like Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac) and the prophets declaring signs and open prophecies; and joyfully awaited His coming.

Man was able to know the identity of the Newborn and the date of His incarnation. Man was also able to realize His ultimate love for mankind and His work of salvation. Yet the greatness of the incarnation of the eternal, infinite, and mighty Word of God still was a wondrous and overwhelming surprise for both humans as well as the heavenly hosts.

Although history recognized and confirmed this event, it is still a joyful surprise for every believer whenever he comes to meet the Newborn in the manger and realize His mysteries.

It is a surprise that does not get old or become obsolete, for every time the believer meets with the Savior, it's as if they are meeting for the very first time!

❖ Behold, the angels are praising, and the archangels are singing together in perfect harmony! All are united to honor this glorious feast beholding the Lord on earth and man in heaven! He, who is from above, dwells on earth for our salvation; and man, who dwells down on earth, ascends to heaven with the divine mercies! Behold,



"Bethlehem" resembles heaven, as one can hear the sounds of the angels' praises from the planets. Instead of the sun, the Sun of Righteousness is shining from every side<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

Everyone who experiences the incarnated Word of God stands in amazement - unable to describe the greatness of the birth of Christ. Some people call the celebration of His birth the "Feast of Feasts." Some fathers and prophets carried their spiritual lyres and joyfully praise this unprecedented event, when both heaven and earth were shaken.

#### **God Is Joyfully Rejoicing Over You**

The prophet Zephaniah witnessed God the Father rejoicing over His dearly beloved mankind. The eternal Word of God descended upon mankind to sanctify it, and to alleviate the spirit of enmity from it so that it can enjoy being the child of God, and to carry Christ's righteousness in it, in ultimate heavenly beauty.

When Zephaniah beheld the birth of Christ, he directed his praises to every believer united to Him saying, "The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness... He will rejoice over you with singing. I will gather those who sorrow over the appointed assembly who are among you, to whom its reproach is a burden" (Zephaniah 3:17-18). Upon Christ's birth, Zephaniah saw that there is joy and happiness in heaven as on earth, for it is the feast of heaven and earth! It is the moment God, the Lover of mankind, has been waiting for to fulfill His promises to His beloved man.



#### **The Second Adam and the New Paradise**

God had planted the Garden of Eden for our first parents (Gen 2:8), Adam, and Eve, to live as a king and queen. But soon, the bride and groom were evicted due to Satan's deceit and their acceptance of his destructive advice. But now, we behold in the birth of Christ, the Lord, the coming of the Second Adam to make Himself and His bride a new garden, not on earth, but inside every man.

In Matthew 13:1-9 we behold Christ, the Lord, sitting in a boat by the sea side, where many people had gathered. He spoke to them about a parable of the divine Farmer who went forth to sow. This scene is a great portrayal of the second Adam, the incarnated Word of God, coming to us through the sea (which represents the world), talking and working from the boat (which represents His human nature). He speaks to us about the new seed that He sows inside us, for He is the Farmer, and He is also the Seed. He waters His garden inside us, and offers us to bear the fruits of His Holy Spirit; and calls upon us to focus our attention on it "For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21).

He wanted fruits from the fig tree on the road (Matthew 21:19), and asked for water from the Samaritan woman (John 4:7), for He is both hungry and thirsty. He longs for you to say, "Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat its pleasant fruits" (Song of Solomon 4:16). He rejoices in His paradise inside you, and calls upon the heavenly hosts to share His joy: "I have come to my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink deeply, O beloved ones" (Song of Songs 5:1).



The Word of God has created the world to be your royal palace, but your relation to Adam and Eve has destroyed your kingship, and has closed the door to the Garden of Eden before you. Thus, earth has turned to a valley of tears (Psalms 84:6) bringing thorns and thistles to you (Genesis 3:18). Now, the Last Adam has come (Corinthians 1 15:45) carrying the thorns on His forehead, to make out of His believers a new Eden, or His kingdom carrying His holy fruits.

**St. Augustine** says, "Paradise is the Church, as it was called in the Songs of Songs. The four rivers of paradise are the four Gospels; and the fruitful trees are the saints; the fruits are their deeds; and the tree of life is the Holy of the Holiest which is Christ!"<sup>2</sup>

### **Fasting Before Christmas and Enjoying the Lord's Transfiguration**

As God has prepared for this day, a day that heaven and earth rejoice even before the creation of the world, the Church now prepares us to celebrate before Christmas by fasting for a period of about 40 days. The purpose of this fast is not to deprive us of certain food for a time; but to enjoy our unity with Jesus Christ. He is fasting also on our behalf so we would be prepared to ascend with Him - not only up to the Mountain of Tabor - but to God's embrace so that we could know the Holy Trinity, the Lover of mankind. The Word of God abides in us and He builds His kingdom there so that we may enjoy beholding Him through a true live faith.



The Word of God has descended to us incarnated, and thus has hidden the brightness of His divinity and the glory of His eternality. He was found as a Man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8). However, He did not want to hide His true identity from us, for He is the Heavenly Groom who wants to reveal all His mysteries to us, His bride! He acquired our human nature so that we can meet Him, accept Him amongst us, and enjoy sharing in Him and being united with Him so that He could reveal His divine mysteries to us. The utmost purpose of His incarnation was to grant us the ability to see Him, and to meet God, His Father, and unite with Him.

During Christmas we realize that He has come so that we could be with Him, and ascend with the men of the Old and New Testaments on the Mountain of Tabor. He would then appear before us and we would say with St. Peter: "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (Matthew 17:4). Let us ask Moses and Elijah, who alone have appeared with Jesus Christ on the mountain: "Why were you the only ones who appeared with Him?" The answer is that they were the only ones in the Old Testament who had fasted for 40 days without any food, drink, rest, or anything materialistic, until they ascended the Mountain of Sinai (Mt. Horeb) where they met with God, saw Him and spoke with Him! They did not feel the need for anything during their fasting, because they were on their way to meet with God and to talk with Him. These were the happiest days of their lives, for their inner eyes were opened to behold God and to enjoy His divine presence. Christ, the Lord, Himself fasted for 40 days on our behalf so that, when He appears with the two prophets before the three apostles, He affords us the right to meet Him, to get to know Him personally, to enjoy the



brightness of His beauty, and to accept Him as our Heavenly Eternal Groom.

### **Enjoying the Right to Be God's Children**

Man was in need of meeting God, the Source of all life so that He may return life back to man after he had suffered his spiritual death. Through God, man can live, taste righteousness, and enjoy the heavenly matters. The Son has come to us incarnated and has become One of us so we can accept Him. The Son was born a mortal birth for He took on a body, just like me. His birth granted us the right to become God's children by washing us with the water and blood that have been poured from His stabbed side!

By sharing our flesh and blood, the Lord granted us to be His brethren, while He is the First-Born Brother (Romans 8:29). We became members of His Body, the

Church, and Jesus Christ is the Head. He presents us as one body before His Father! In this way, He transformed us from the physical birth to the divine spiritual birth. He moved us from this world so that we may live as if we were in heaven - while still here on earth!

❖ "And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:5). The darkness (of which St. John speaks of) is the ignorance of men who were blinded by their putrid lusts and unfaithfulness. Therefore, the "Word" by whom all things were made, had to mend the minds and hearts of people to give them back their soundness. Thus, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), because enlightening is His specialty, for in Him was life and the life was the light of men.



However, we were not ready to respond to His work among us, because we fell under the putridity of sin, which had separated us from Him. We were in need of purification. This purification from evil and pride can only be accomplished through the Blood of the Righteous One, through the humility of God Himself so that we may share in His likeness.

The Word of God became a Righteous Man to mediate on behalf of the sinners and reconcile them to God (the Father). By being attached to us, He resembled us through His humanity in order to eradicate from us what is not like Him, which is our sinfulness! By sharing our death, He granted us to share His life. The death of the Righteous, which He endured according to His own free choice, eradicated the death of the sinners - which would have been our well-deserved judgment.

**St. Augustine**

❖ The Only Begotten Son, who was eternally born according to His nature, was born a second birth that is not according to His nature so that we could get another birth that is not according to our nature! The Son, whose first birth was timeless, was born a second birth so that we can learn His infinite greatness from His first birth, and His unlimited grace from His second birth!

**St. Ephraem of Syria**

### **Ascending to Heaven**

The Heavenly Word of God descended to our earth to carry His believers within Him so that they would experience the heavenly life, and not be occupied by anything else but heaven. St. Paul the apostle says, He "made us sit together in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 2:6). St. Paul lived with all his mind and effort in heaven.



Neither his service, nor his labors, nor even his sleep withheld him from enjoying our Heavenly Lord, Jesus Christ. He even longed to depart from this life to be with Him.

My dear, the Lord's kingdom dwells within you; thus, you can mysteriously enjoy the sincerity of this Kingdom here until the Son of Man comes on the Day of Judgment to raise you up with Him to where He dwells. He told His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2-3).

No one can ascend to heaven, except Him, who dwells in heaven and has descended incarnated, the Son of Man. Through Him we have become members of His Body, and thus would ascend to heaven; however, not by our own power or righteousness, but because of the Head - for where the Head dwells, there should also be His members! Thus, worshipping God does not aim at anything more but for all of us to enjoy the Heavenly Son!

- ❖ Just like a merciful tutor who cares for his disciples, and descends to their level in order to more easily teach them the difficult materials that they are unable to understand, so does the Word of God with us. He saw that man refused to meditate on the Lord; and with eyes directed downwards, man started to look for God in the nature and in the world of senses. They searched for gods among mortal men and devils. Therefore, the Word of God, the Loving Savior, took a body, walked among men, and met halfway with the senses of all humans so that He could direct the people to Himself and focus their senses on His person. When He was seen as a human, humans were readily convinced with the things

He has done not just as a human, rather as the Lord and the true Word of God.

**St. Athanasius, the Apostle**

- ❖ The Righteous One is not from earth, but while He was on earth, His home is heaven; and thus He will not hear the words, "for dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19), but rather He would hear, "And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly (Man)" (1 Corinthians 15:49)<sup>3</sup>.

**Origen**

**Enjoying the Coming of the Groom Himself**

God has created the entire world like a royal palace for man to live in as God's icon and heaven's representative. Man is given power over the earth - over the birds of the sky, the creatures of the seas, and over all other creatures (Genesis 1:26). But, when man ignored God's divine love for him, and the capabilities that was offered him; life became miserable. Worry, which destroyed his life, replaced the divine heavenly peace. His nature became putrid as did the entire creation that God had created especially for man.

In the midst of this bitter picture, man had denied God's existence and His divine care. Even if man chose to believe in God, he perceived Him as a condemning Judge; who does not empathize with man's weakness, and does not respond to satisfy all his needs - whether materialistic, social, physical, or psychological! What occupied man - that is, if he believed in God - was to gratify this angry God in any possible way. Some have even offered their children as human sacrifices to please the gods, while others have wounded themselves in an effort to appeal to the gods and their mercy.





The incarnation of the Word of God fixed these putrid human ideals so that man would realize that God is alive, loving, and humble. In His humbleness, He sent His incarnated Word to be offered and sacrificed for all of mankind, and to grant eternal life to those who believe in Him.

❖ The Creator of time was born in a specific time! He, who without His divine command not a day can come and go, has chosen a particular day for His incarnation! He, who was born from the Father and was not created, took a body from a woman whom He had created. He took a body to purify the adulteration of the body! For that sake the Bridegroom came out of His chamber, and rejoiced as a strong Man running a race. He is kind and tender as a Groom, yet mighty as a strong Man! He is lovable, yet awesome! He is beauty to the righteous, yet arid to the evil! He filled the entrails of His mother, yet still dwelt in His Father's bosom! In His chamber - the Virgin's entrails - His divinity united with His human nature. Thus, the Word has taken a body for us and came out of His mother's entrails to live amongst us so that when He ascends to His Father, He would prepare us a place there.

**St. Augustine**

### **His Incarnation Expelled the Evil Beasts**

Because our doors were open to every evil beast, our inner lives were a shelter for every evil and impurity, and our inner city was without walls enabling the wild beasts to come without hindrance. Our Lord, Jesus Christ, has come to expel these evil beasts from our land (which is also His land) so that He can dwell in it as well. As it was once said, "And I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid; and I will rid the land of



evil beasts" (Leviticus 26:6). What are these evil beasts but Satan and his angels!

❖ The king does not always present himself in his usual appearance. He sometimes replaces his crown and purple robe with the clothes of a regular soldier in order to deter the enemy from recognizing and attacking him. But in God's case, it was completely the opposite. He did that so that the enemy would not recognize Him and thus *won't* flee away – instead, going to battle with Him. And also so His people won't get entangled before His brightness, for He has come to rescue, not to terrify them<sup>4</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

### **His Incarnation Destroyed Satan's Throne**

After Adam had trespassed God's commandment, Satan and all his dark forces sat inside man's heart, mind, and body as on a throne, for he found much evil in his heart, will, emotions, and desires. Then, when the Word of God became the Son of Man, the enemy wanted Him too; as he thought that he will find something evil in Him as well. But, when he dared to enter into battle with Him, he lost his throne inside every man who believes in Him (Christ) and is united with the Christ, the Holy One.

❖ Satan and all the forces of darkness sat inside man's heart, mind, and body as on their throne Thus, God came and took a body from the Virgin Mary, because who could bear to behold His unhidden divinity without His taken a body? Thus, He spoke to the people through an instrument, the body, and destroyed the evil spirits that made themselves a place - the thrones they set in man's mind and thought - inside the body. God purified man's





conscience, and made Himself a throne in his mind, thoughts, and body<sup>5</sup>.

**St. Macarius the Great**

### **God's Longing for Your Longing for Him!**

Some people might ask: "Why did the Word of God, the Almighty, descend to man, the weak creature?" **St. Gregory of Nazianzus** answers: "God is thirsty for your thirst toward Him." This is the true love: that He did not just pour His love on man, but He also demands man's love back, not because He needs it, but rather in order for man to be in touch with the mutual and shared love between God and man.

The symbol of God's love to us is His longing for us and His thirst for our hearts. He offers Himself as an offering of saturation, joy, rejoicing, glory, and enlightenment to the human soul so that its love and thirst for Him would grow. As it is written in the Book of Sirach, "They that eat Me shall yet be hungry, and they that drink Me shall yet be thirsty" (Sirach 24:21). The son of Sirach expressed God's love to man by saying, "God's delight and pleasure lies in the humans."

### **What Do the Fathers Say About The Incarnation of the Word of God?**

❖ God became poor to give rest to the poor. He became poor so that no one would despair his salvation because of his poverty<sup>6</sup>.

**St. Jerome**

❖ As Christ is the Son of God and you have dressed Him on you, for He is covering you, you have become like Him; for you have united with Him and carry His appearance<sup>7</sup>.



❖ He was born in the body, so you could be born in the Spirit. He was born from a woman, so you would cease to be a son of woman<sup>8</sup>.

❖ He became a Son of Man so that the sons of man can become sons of God<sup>9</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

❖ The Word of God has descended from heaven to become a Bridegroom of the human nature. He took it as His dwelling place. He engaged it (humanity) in order to lead it to Him so that it would grow the fruits of spiritual wisdom.

❖ The return of the Holy Spirit to man through Christ, the incarnated God, the Second Adam, is eternal. The Holy Spirit dwelt in the Second Adam due to His eternal righteousness; because the unity of the divinity with the human nature in the person of Christ is eternal... this is a solid guarantee for mankind and its stability in the new life.

❖ God found that man has descended to the level of beasts, and thus has put Himself as food in the manger so that when we discard the beastly nature, we would ascend to

the level of understanding that is fit for the human nature. By approaching the manger, His personal dining table, we do not find materialistic food, but rather heavenly bread that is His live body<sup>10</sup>.

**St. Cyril the Great**

❖ The Perfect Teacher of the children became a Child amongst the children to grant wisdom to the dull<sup>11</sup>.

**St. Cyril of Jerusalem**



- ❖ The purpose of Christ's incarnation was to prepare us for the road to heaven<sup>12</sup>.

**St. Ambrose**

- ❖ If He did not become a Man, how could men see Him and be saved - knowing that they are helpless when they look in the sun and glare at its rays with their eyes?<sup>13</sup>
- ❖ Jesus has come, powerful in battle, to destroy all our enemies and to save us from their traps. He set us free from our enemies and all who detest us<sup>14</sup>.

**Origen**

- ❖ He fasted for 40 days, just like Moses and Elijah, to walk the path of the prophets of His Father. They tasted His mysteries through their prophecies, and exemplified His fasting with theirs so that they can resemble Him.

**St. Jacob of Serugh**

- ❖ Satan, who was a king, became a disgrace; and thus made himself crowns of lies. He was thrown out with his throne, for God dwells in the world! The "Child" came into the manger, and expelled the devil from His kingdom!<sup>15</sup>
- ❖ The darkness was routed, as the devil was defeated, and the Light appeared; crying and announcing that the



Firstborn Son has triumphed. The dark devil was defeated along with all the darkness, and the Light - that is ours - has triumphed with the Sun<sup>16</sup>.

**St. Ephraem of Syria**

**Translated by:  
Mary Hany Dawood,  
Salwa Wahba**

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers, vo.1 1, p 110.*

<sup>2</sup> *City of God 13: 21*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Fragments from Catena (Frs. of Church ,vol. 97, p. 3.)*

<sup>4</sup> *In Matt. Hom 2:4.*

<sup>5</sup> *Homily 6:5.*

<sup>6</sup> *On Ps. Hom. 35.*

<sup>7</sup> *Comm. in Gal. 3. PG 61:656C – D.*

<sup>8</sup> للمؤلف : الحب الإلهي ، 1967 ، ص 283 .

<sup>9</sup> للمؤلف : القديس يوحنا الذهبي الفم ، 1980 ، ص 295 .

<sup>10</sup> *Homily 1.*

<sup>11</sup> *Cat. Lect. 12: 1.*

<sup>12</sup> *On the Christian Faith, Book 3:7:50.*

<sup>13</sup> *Barnabas, 5:5.*

<sup>14</sup> *In Luc. hom 10: 3.*

<sup>15</sup> *Hymns of Nativity 14:11*

<sup>16</sup> تسابيح الميلاد.