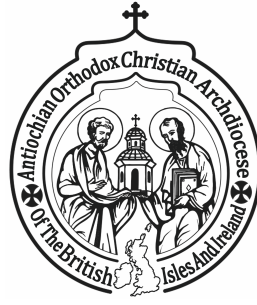


Antiochian Orthodox
Christian Archdiocese
of the British Isles and
Ireland



الأبرشية الإنطاكية
المسيحية الأرثوذكسية
للجزر البريطانية و إيرلندا

Registered Charity Number: 1175538

Archbishop: His Eminence, Metropolitan Silouan Oner

London 20.12.23

To all the Faithful of our God-protected Archdiocese; to the Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, and all our Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Grace, peace and mercy from our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!

“Christ is Born!” ... “Glorify Him!”

Amid the darkness, cold, and stillness of the night of this world, a bright light appears in the cave of Bethlehem that warms this cold, illuminates this darkness, and erases this stillness of the night with the voices and praises of the angels for the incarnation and birth of the Word, *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).*

Some people wonder why we celebrate this holiday with so much joy?! We celebrate this feast because in it God the Word was incarnated and the second person of the Holy Trinity descended into the world, and in it God became man so that man could become god by grace.

On this feast, God’s will was revealed for us. Because Christ humbled himself greatly and emptied himself, taking our image in order to elevate and divinise us. For all of this, we celebrate and celebrate with great joy.

Christmas has come again to tell us that life goes on. But “Now is the judgment of this world” (John 12:31), and His judgment is that light came into the world, but humanity loved darkness more than light because their deeds were evil. This is the fundamental and terrible judgment.

Despite the non-stop wars caused by human greed, the psychological crises caused by our daily problems, the despair resulting from the loss of hope, the emptiness that is the result of man withdrawing into himself, and many other things, the newborn Jesus Christ from his pure mother turns the scales entirely for us. Before Him, life was a material earthly life limited to time and place, but at His birth, the gates of Heaven were opened for us so that we would no longer be earthly, nor limited to an end, but rather sharing eternity with Him and in His embrace.

Therefore, it is necessary today, as the light of the world shines from Bethlehem, for us to ask ourselves that, as members of the body of the Church, are we citizens of Heaven, or have we

become citizens of this earth because of our adherence to worldly matters, and our hearts have become without hope of salvation?

My brothers and sisters, like simple shepherds, with a pure heart and humility, let us repent before the cave, prostrate ourselves, and glorify the incarnate Saviour, abandoning our pride, sins, and desires, and let us place our entire lives next to the born divine Child.

I wish everyone a life as warm as the warmth of the cave that received the Lord, and as peaceful as the peace of nature and the animals that participated in welcoming the newborn Child, and as enlightened as the light of the star that illuminated the way for the Magi to see and know the Lord, and all of it as giving as the gifts of the Magi, and all of it as a prayer as the praise of the angels: "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*"

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

God bless you!

Your prayers!

I remain your Father in Christ

+Silouan

**+ Silouan, Metropolitan of the Orthodox Christian
British Isles and Ireland**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+Silouan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East