



Good Wishes for the Christmas Feast 2016

*Christ was born in Palestine
Christianity was born in Syria*



We all know that Christ was born Palestine, in Bethlehem. But we may not be aware that Christianity was born in Syria at that time, meaning, what is nowadays Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.

The birth of Jesus is linked to Christianity's birth, just as the birth of Christianity is linked to Jesus' birth! Hence the phrase *Anno Domini*, or year of Christmas! Thus, our everyday calendar is the continuation of the story of the Nativity of Jesus Christ.

This applies especially to Christians of the Middle East, where we can affirm with pride: Christ was born in Palestine and Christianity was born in Syria. Thus, Christian presence in the Middle East is geographical and historical evidence of the birth of Jesus Christ. Fewer or no Christians in the Middle East means Christ's absence from our East, and the loss of basic geographical, historical, human and humanitarian evidence for Christ's birth, life and Gospel message.

That is why the presence of Christians in the Middle East is so very important, linked as it is to the story of their great historical role in the region. That is why our concern for Christian presence must also be a concern for Christian role: for there is no Christian role without presence and no Christian presence without role.

We thank our friends, who stand shoulder to shoulder with us in support of our presence, role and witness. We raise our prayers for peace and security in our region, which is continuing on its way of the Cross. Peace is the great warranty for Christian presence and role, with all and for all our dear fellow-citizens of the East.

We send our good wishes to all our friends and benefactors! We pray for peace, especially in Syria, Iraq and Palestine.

Merry Christmas!

Holy New Year of the Lord, 2017!


+ Gregorios III

Patriarch of Antioch and all the East
of Alexandria and Jerusalem
Spiritual Protector of the Order of Saint Lazarus

