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SYRIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE
OF ANTIOCH & ALL THE EAST
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BY THE GRACE OF GOD

Ignatius Aphrem II

Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church



**Our Beloved Children in Christ,
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.**

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light” (Isaiah 9: 2)

The prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Emmanuel” (Isaiah 7: 14). The light of salvation has shone upon us; He is the true sun of righteousness, our Lord Jesus Christ. With His birth, he removed the darkness of ignorance from our world, obscured by sin, despair and loss of faith. His light filled the hearts of people to shine with hope on all creatures, because He is truly “the light of the world” (John 8: 12).

In these difficult days, when man is unjustly treating his fellow man and refusing to accept others, we observe poverty taking hold of human life. Many become indifferent; their eyes become blinded and their ears deafened to the bitter reality and great misery that their fellows are experiencing. However, hope in the Lord remains great and is renewed with His miraculous birth; grief is replaced by the promised joy and Christmas is joyously celebrated. The humble new born gave us back our lives following death caused by sin; He gave us eternal life.

In the countries of the Middle East, in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, we celebrate this holy occasion despite the misery caused by the massacres and forced migration that affect us. In spite of the continuation of the abduction of our beloved brethren in Christ, their Eminences the Archbishops of Aleppo Mor Gregorius Youhanna Ibrahim and Boulos Yaziji – for whom we pray that they will be with us soon, we carry the yoke of Christ to be witnesses of light and life.

On this occasion, we wish all our spiritual children in our Syriac Orthodox parishes and dioceses throughout the world a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We pray that this New Year 2015 will bring an end to war and that peace will prevail on earth. We, likewise, pray for the good health, well-being and prosperity of all of you.