



Reflections from the Holy Land Another Sad Christmas

It is hard to believe that another year is ending and that we are already in the advent season. Christmas is around the corner, and I must admit that the magic of the season continues to inspire, war or not. A few days ago, the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem issued a statement calling on the faithful to celebrate in a modest way and to keep the focus on the religious ceremonies and the true meaning of the birth of our Savior. In my mind, shouldn't this be the message every year? I suppose the continuing war and its devastating impact on everyone in the Holy Land was the trigger for the statement with over 45,000 killed since the beginning of the war and well over 100,000 injured. It is certainly a time to look back, but more importantly a time to look forward. War will be behind us soon and we need to start to plan not only on rebuilding the physical structures, but more importantly the human soul. We need to carve a way forward to refocus on the Christian values lost during the war. Unless we can focus on forgiveness, coexistence, love, peace, patience, kindness, humility, compassion, and honesty amongst many other values, then the road ahead will be long and difficult. This is not to underestimate the power of prayer to lead us into a better future.

Advent is certainly a time of waiting and preparation for the celebration of Jesus's birth at Christmas. Celebrating an advent is a season of prayer, fasting, and repentance followed by anticipation, joy and hope. How can we still have hope amidst all the destruction, killing, and hatred? It is certainly up to each one of us guided by the spirit of the season to move on and to focus on the future. A future that we owe to the coming generations. It will not be easy, but possible. Let us not forget that this is not the first war in our region, and it must be stated that the Church is always there during dark times to offer support, prayer, and most importantly hope.

Over the past few weeks, and upon the request of His Beatitude Cardinal Pizzaballa, many of my colleagues at the Latin Patriarchate have been diligently working on a report entitled "Emergency Aid Appeal Report" to highlight the work of the church over the past year in being that source of support and beacon of hope to so many suffering people. It is estimated that over 140,000 of our brothers and sisters have been aided by various means since the beginning of the war including 100% of the Christian community in Gaza, and an estimated 30% on the West Bank. We are not there only for the Christian community, but to anyone who is suffering. We further commit to continuing our support in all the categories mentioned in the report for as long as needed. I urge you to read the report which can be accessed through this link <https://online.flipbuilder.com/LatinPatriarchate/pcnw/> and beg for your continued prayers as you read the report.

As people of deep faith and hope, we wish to extend our best wishes for the Christmas season and pray that 2025 will bring better times to our wounded and bleeding Holy Land. Thank you for all your support and please keep praying for your suffering brothers and sisters in the Holy Land. Merry Christmas to you, your colleagues, and loved ones from all of us in the Holy Land!

Sami El-Yousef
Chief Executive Officer