

PATRIARCHAL ENCYCLICAL FOR CHRISTMAS 2012

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THEODOROS II
BY THE GRACE OF GOD POPE AND PATRIARCH
OF ALEXANDRIA, THE ENTIRE LAND OF EGYPT AND ALL AFRICA
TO THE ENTIRE BODY OF THE APOSTOLIC AND PATRIARCHAL THRONE OF ALEXANDRIA GRACE AND
MERCY AND PEACE
FROM OUR LORD AND GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST
BORN IN BETHLEHEM

My dear brothers and beloved children in the Lord,

Two thousand years ago God revealed His endless compassion towards mankind: *“for God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3: 16). The Son and Word of God was emptied, and took on the form of a servant. He was born as a man and humbled Himself as a man. He accepted humanity despite the diversity. He became the One through whom the race of man was reunited with God.

God’s hospitality of mankind in the person of Jesus Christ became a prototype of hospitality in our relationships with others. This hospitality means an emptying of ourselves and an unconditional acceptance of others. This hospitality is not limited only to the members of our community. The Incarnated Jesus calls us to love even our enemies and to pray for them.

He chose a “foreigner”, a Samaritan, to show the need for fulfillment of the commandment to love our neighbor. He extended His hospitality to all who had need of compassion. He offered hospitality to all who had been pushed to the fringe of society. He Himself often faced the inability of people to understand Him. He Himself often experienced rejection and sought hospitality.

Beloved brothers and sisters,

Jesus Christ’s example of embracing the despised, offering hospitality to strangers and accepting others, should become a source of inspiration for our social behaviour towards all who have need of hospitality. During these times we ought to put hospitality into practice not only as an offering of help towards others. During these times we ought to experience hospitality as an opening to others.

An opening based on respecting the value of all other people equally. An opening based on the unshakeable faith that God meets us every day in our peaceful and loving contacts with our fellow human beings; fellow human beings unknown to us, the poor and tormented, yet also fellow human beings nationally, culturally and religiously different from us.

The acceptance of others is the proof of genuine hospitality. The acceptance of others is the realization of the commandment *“love your neighbor as yourself”*. The acceptance of others can change them, as it can also change us.

This is the message that I send to you from Africa, the land where God speaks to us through others to teach us and to transform the land on which God uses

us to transform others.

Many years!

† THEODOROS II
Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa

*In the Great City
of Alexandria
Feast of the Nativity 2012*