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SYRIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE  
OF ANTIOCH & ALL THE EAST

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دمشق - سورية

BY THE GRACE OF GOD

**Ignatius Zakka I Iwas**  
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East  
Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church

No.E206/09



17-December-2009

Apostolic Benediction to our beloved Metropolitans and to our beloved spiritual children: the Reverend clergy and the faithful of all our Malankara Syrian Jacobite churches and congregations in the Arabian Gulf Region, North America, Europe, Australia and Singapore.

At this august occasion of the celebration of the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we have much delight to extend to you all, our paternal greetings and prayerful best wishes of a Merry Christmas. The blessed Apostle Matthew quotes the prophecy of Isaiah about the birth of our Lord: *"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel, which means, God with us"* (1:23). In the fullness of time, the Light of God, whom the prophets and generations eagerly awaited, came and took birth in this world. He came to bring heaven down to earth and to be with His creation. But ironically, those awaited him were unable to realize and receive Him. Even after 2000 years, millions of the children of God grope in darkness without grasping the real Light of the World.

When we celebrate this feast, we have to re-examine ourselves to see if we have provided for Him to be with us and whether our hearts are eligible to be His abode. Jesus told: *"the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head"*. Many bear the name Christian, but have not given room for Jesus Christ to stay with them. Our Lord Jesus keeps on knocking at the doors of our hearts waiting for us to open our doors for him (Rev. 3:20). He wishes to come into us and live with us.

Our dear spiritual children, the uncertainties of this world are disheartening. The current financial recession and the associated crises are immediate examples. Even in this high-tech era, calculations and expectations of human fail pathetically. In a way, such eventualities sarcastically question the human expertises and his technological achievements. Many have sadly lost their jobs and business and are suffering. But we have to remember the promise of our Lord, to be with us for ever (Matthew 28:20). At the same time, reckon that, Jesus has not promised: there won't be any suffering or pain for His faithful. But He told: *"In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33). The proponents of the so called 'gospel of prosperity' are the false prophets, who misguide people for their vested motives. But what really matters is, whether Jesus Christ is with us. He told: *Abide in me, and I in you* (John 15:4). His promise to be with us, is never failing. Hence we should never allow fear or worries about future, dominate our spiritual life. Wait for God. His presence with us and His loving grace and power, will open new doors for us and enable us to go ahead with a renewed zest and vigour. May the celebrations of this Christmas enable us to open our doors for our God-Immanuel and let Him be with us. We wish you all a Blessed New Year and extend our Apostolic blessings to you. May the grace of God be with you all. **ܐܘܨܬܝܢ ܘܡܫܝܚܝܢ**

Copies to : All Metropolitans in Charge of the Gulf Regions, Europe, Australia, Singapore, and North America.

Forwarded with greetings,

+Archbishop Theethose Yeldho