



# St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral

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## Pastoral Message: Nativity of Christ 2019

*“Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2: 10-11).*

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

I greet you in the name of the Prince of Peace, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who was born in Bethlehem from the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit for our Salvation. Whether you were a child, a teenager, a student, an adult, a mother, a father, a jeddo or a setto, and everything in between, my message to you is that **I love you**.

As St. Elias Cathedral transitions and renews her gratefulness to the three-decade ministry of Archpriest Ghattas Hajal, and as I the adjust to my new ministry as the unworthy Pastor and Dean of the Cathedral, I will be publishing periodic seasonal Pastoral messages in which I share with you some reflections, challenges and visions.

As we celebrate the Nativity Jesus Christ and open a New Year and decade, I would like to derive three suggested focal areas for 2020 from the meanings of this great feast, I mean God becoming a man and penetrating our physical world:

**Joy:** The word “JOY” is often associated with Christmas; it is the word the Angel of the Lord used to tell the shepherds about Christ’s birth. Let us remember that practicing our **faith is a matter of joy**. Actions that we do collectively and individually ought to reflect joy. When people look at a Christian community and don’t see real joy, they will not be attracted. Let us, therefore, remember the greatest gift given to us and reflect this with physical and spiritual joy. Let us **commit to our Church with a spirit of joy and not obligation**.

**Hospitality:** In a way, it was the hospitality of a human being that provided Mary with a manger to give birth to the Lord because there were no guest rooms. **Hospitality is a Christian virtue**. We **welcome everyone** into our houses, not as guests, but as family. If the Church is our home, let us work hard on how to **be hospitable to those that might visit our Church**. Your **smile, actions and reactions** might be the **only Gospel** a person might ever read in the **physical Church** and in your **daily life**.

**Adoption:** St. Paul teaches us that the birth of Christ is the very action of God adopting us as sons. Let us **assume this adoption** by living as children of God and His Church. None of us is a guest; we are all children and members of the family. This is a **privilege**, but also a **responsibility**. As members of a family we are responsible to its **well-being by contributing** to its health. Practically we do this by, firstly, making sure we **support** our **family** with our **time, talents and money** [*with joy and not obligation*]; Secondly, by being **serious** about our faith through **prayer, education and practice**; and thirdly, by contributing to the growth of the body by helping **develop** the **parish** in various areas including **humanitarian work, youth ministry and organizational sustainability**. Assume this Ownership & Responsibility!

Wishing you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a Happy New year and seeking your prayers for me and my family, I remain,

Fr. Nektarios Najjar, Pastor and Dean.