

December 15, 2016
12/016

His Holiness Tawadros II
Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of All Africa
Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria
Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
Amba Rueiss Building
222 Ramses Street
Abbaseya
P.O. Box 9035
Nasr City, Cairo
EGYPT



P.O. BOX 675
SYOSSET, NY 11791-0675
TEL: 516-922-0550
FAX: 516-922-0954
WEBSITE: WWW.OCA.ORG

Your Holiness,

Christ is in our midst!

It is with sorrow and yet with hope that I extend to Your Holiness the above traditional words of greeting in which Christians express their faith in the risen and ascended Lord who nevertheless remains among us, even in our darkest moments.

The world has once more witnessed such a dark moment in the brutal and senseless murder of the faithful of St. Peter's Coptic Orthodox Church in Cairo this week. These cruel and inhuman acts, which have been perpetrated by militant extremists upon the Coptic Orthodox Church, are an affront against all of humanity.

I would like to express the deep sorrow and shared grief of the Bishops, the clergy, the monastics and the faithful of the Orthodox Church in America to the families and friends of those whose lives were brutally cut down in this most recent attack. This sorrow and grief is felt in the hearts of all Christians, and indeed, should resonate with all who would consider themselves human beings.

This act is made more tragic in that it has taken place during this season in which the Christian world prepares for the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, who became incarnate to heal this broken world and to raise up fallen humanity. Even the natural world proclaims this great mystery: *Make ready, O cave, for the Ewe Lamb comes, bearing Christ in her womb. And do thou, O manger, accept Him who by His word has loosed us dwellers on earth from acts that are against reason.*

Our prayer is that all dwellers on earth would indeed receive the life-giving Word and become reason-endowed creatures who stand fast in their faith in God and refrain from acts against reason and against their fellow human beings. May we enter a new time of tolerance and religious peace in Egypt and in the entire region of the Middle East through Christ who has mercy on us and on His whole world.

With love in the Lord,

Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada