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Patriarch Underlines Role of Family, Value of Life

Says Christ Child Teaches Forgiveness and Reconciliation

BETHLEHEM, West Bank, DEC. 25, 2010 (Zenit.org).- The birth of Christ teaches the faithful many lessons, including the importance of family and the value of life, says the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Patriarch Fouad Twal reflected on the lessons to be learned from the Incarnation during Midnight Mass at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, which was attended by Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian National Authority, as well as its prime minister, Salam Fayad.

"Christmas is a feast for all the people of the Holy Land," began Patriarch Twal, "and for all who bring about peace and reconciliation."

He reflected on the birth of Christ, who was born in a cave, "teaching us humility, meekness, simplicity, and innocence, that we often forget in a world marked by violence and desire for power."

The Christ Child, he continued, was also "born into a loving family, which was an experience of love."

"The family is essential for life and proper human development," the patriarch continued. "If the family is healthy, the entire society benefits. If not, the rifts among its members and disunity, have negative impact and consequences on the entire social order. Every family is called by Christ to follow the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth."

Patriarch Twal noted as well that "Christmas presents us with the unique value of human life, a gift of God. Every child born or unborn, has a distinctive dignity and deserves the greatest respect, because it is created in the image of the Divine Child in the manger.

"It is sad to note and heartbreaking to see that in our world millions of abortions are performed each year because of selfishness, hardness of hearts, ignorance, lack of preparation to accept and foster life, and the outright rejection of a life that begins from the first moment of conception."

"In a world torn apart by violence and fundamentalism, which legitimizes the worst actions, including killings in churches, the Child of Bethlehem reminds us that the first commandment is Love," he continued. "He teaches us forgiveness and reconciliation, even with our enemies."

"Jesus is showing us the path of unity within our families, our communities, and our peoples," the patriarch added. "This teaching is also addressed to leaders of nations, who direct the fate and future of peoples and nations."

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