

MAY THIS CHRISTMAS BE A NEW BEGINNING

by **Mary Joseph**

The Egyptian people are facing youth unemployment, widespread poverty and an unstable economy. But Egypt is also home to the Middle East's largest Christian population – and despite violent attacks in recent years, the Egyptian Church is faithful and thriving.

CHRISTMAS IN JANUARY

I am from a Coptic Orthodox family, and we celebrate Christmas on 7 January. On Christmas Eve we attend Mass with family and friends at St Mark's, the main Coptic church in Cairo. We sing Christmas songs of praise with joyful tunes, and listen to the liturgy and sermon.

The time of the mass can change each year – normally it's at midnight, but a few years ago there were some security alerts, so the service was held earlier in the evening to make it safer to get to and from the church. Lately, things have calmed down a lot, but even if we don't feel safe we go to church anyway.

On Christmas day, we celebrate with a big family get-together. We give presents and eat traditional Egyptian food like 'molokheya' (a green leafy soup), rice, meats, cake and pastries. My favourite thing to eat at Christmas is ginger cookies, and I love hot chocolate too!

My hope for Egypt this Christmas is for everything to be renewed. The old ways of thinking are still prevailing, and people are still living by very outdated values. So, I hope that the people of Egypt will become more open to learning new things and changing their way of thinking: that they will have a new vision.

PRAY FOR EGYPT

Join us in praying for the nation of Egypt. The Christians needs our prayers after a year with several attacks on Coptic Orthodox Christians – that amidst trying times, the Egyptian people would turn to Jesus and put their hope in Him.

- **Pray that amidst trying times, the Egyptian people would turn to Jesus and put their hope in Him.**
- **Pray that SAT-7's programmes would bring fresh hope to viewers this new year.**



Coptic artwork depicting the Nativity scene

MAKING HOPE VISIBLE

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CHRISTMAS MASS GOES FORWARD ...

The terrorist attack on a tourist bus in Egypt on Friday 28th December 2018 comes at a crucial time for Egypt. Tourism is beginning to regain its strength. This terrorist attack aims to impact tourism which is vital for Egypt's economy, and affect its reputation world-wide. The attack, which came before the New Year celebrations and Eastern Christmas, also aims to affect celebrations of Egyptians.

Even as security tightened, the Coptic Orthodox Church's official spokesperson says that Egypt's new *Nativity of the Christ Church*, the largest in the Middle East, officially opened on January 6, and held Coptic Christmas mass. Pederson says President El-Sisi and Coptic Orthodox Church Pope Tawadros II attended.

He also went on to note that the Church said (in a video posted online) that the public can attend the mass after registering with the Church. The video also shows parts of President El-Sisi's speech during Christmas Mass at the Cathedral of St Mark in Abbasiya district in January 2018, where he promised that, upon its completion in 2019, the new cathedral would host the next Christmas mass.

President El-Sisi commissioned the building of the Cathedral in January 2017 following twin terrorist attacks that killed at least 27 Coptic Egyptians at St Peter and St Paul's Church in Cairo on Palm Sunday. During Christmas mass in 2018, the Egyptian president called the church-to-be "a message of peace and love to the world."

A MESSAGE OF PEACE AND HOPE

In the midst of fear, SAT-7 Egypt has been broadcasting a message of biblical hope throughout the season to encourage their viewers. In light of the events of the past few weeks, Mary Joseph, Communications Officer for SAT-7 Egypt simply says, "We ask for prayers for the safety of all Egyptians."

- **Egypt's minority Christian community has been the target of many vicious attacks. Pray for their protection and for a move of the Spirit to bring an unprecedented unity amongst them – and across His church world-wide.**



MEET OUR VIEWERS

Please pray for the following viewers while reading their messages:

FROM A CHILD VIEWER IN SYRIA

“When we face problems, we ask Jesus to calm the storm. He can silence storms, even the war. With Jesus, I'm not afraid of anything.”

FROM A VIEWER IN ALGERIA

“Pray that I can find and afford a New Testament to learn about Jesus the Christ.”

FROM A VIEWER IN EGYPT

“SAT-7, you are like heaven on earth to us. May praises and joy comfort all who are watching your channel. I pray that you continue to rejoice in the Lord, praising and evangelising Christ's Word to the whole world. I also pray for your safety; may the Lord pour down His heavenly blessings and fill you with the Holy Spirit.”

“I am very happy to have friends like you and thank you for your prayers. My son called me and said that he wants to know Christ. It was a real surprise for me, as for the last three years I used to send Bible verses to him, but he would always tell me, “Better to change your way.” But I know that because of your prayers and the patience God gave me, I continued praying and was hopeful. I told my son that I trusted God and I am very happy that first his father, and then his brother and now he has found Christ. Praise the Lord.”

MORE PRAYER REQUESTS FROM VIEWERS

PRAY FOR SAT-7'S TÜRK VIEWER, ÖZGE

"I am 61 years old and not a Christian but I love your channel very much. I would love it if you could remember me in your prayers. Please pray for me and say my name? That would make me extremely happy. I know Jesus, and I love Him and I can feel that He loves me too. He came to this world in the form of love. I have read the Bible. I haven't understood some of it but I know that He loves me. I am sick, and cannot leave my house. I have seen in the Bible that Jesus heals people. And I pray every day that He comes to me. I thank all in your team. May the love of God be with you. Thank you all very much. Pray for me so that God's Will be done in my life." - Özge

MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM IRAN THROUGH THE MESSAGING APP TELEGRAM

“I wanted to tell you that God is working in my life, and I feel His love and grace. This *Telegram* group is a church that God has built for us with His own hands. Please continue praying for me, as I am experiencing and witnessing the wonderful work of God in my life and how He has defeated the evil one and set me free. He is redeeming my sonship, and I remain in Him. God's grace be upon you.”

SAT-7 ARABIC VIEWER

“I very much enjoyed watching the message on *The Evangelical Christmas Celebration*. Although I am a follower of another religion, I believe God's promise to us is true – when you plant good seeds, you will reap the benefit and so will your children. And if you fear God, He fills your life with His love and forgiveness. Those who plant evil, whether among those close to them or among people they don't know, are deceiving humanity and betraying their promise to God. Thank you very much for this message, and may God reward you, my believing brother.” *(Please pray for this man to meet Jesus)*



MEET OUR VIEWERS

Please pray for the following viewers while reading their messages:

FROM A VIEWER IN IRAN

“Please pray for our house church. We have a court hearing next month, and our leader has already been arrested.”

FROM A VIEWER IN AFGHANISTAN

“I came to know about Christ through your programs. I want to be a follower of God and grow in my relationship with Him. Pray for my wife and children.”

FROM A VIEWER IN EGYPT

“Pray for my son to meet Christ and then become strong to turn his life around.”

FROM A 10-YEAR OLD GIRL IN IRAQ

“My ambition is to be a hymn singer and produce albums of hymns... to give peace to the Christians in Iraq.”

FROM A VIEWER IN TURKEY

“Me, my wife and four children have been in a refugee camp for two years. Life is restricted and hard. Pray for us to go somewhere near home and be accepted.”

FROM A VIEWER IN IRAN

“My children were called pigs and dismissed from school because of my faith. Pray for them to grow in faith and for God to provide us with an environment to live freely.”