



Conference of Bishops and Representatives of the Middle Eastern Apostolic Churches in Australia

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Christmas & New Year message addressed to the children of our Apostolic Eastern Churches in Australia and New Zealand

Dear brothers and sisters

We extend our warmest greetings on Christmas and New Year's Day, asking the Divine Child to keep you in peace of heart and comfort of conscience, bless your children and prove them in the witness of the Truth and the exercise of Christian virtues, "but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13).

What is Christmas and how do we explain its meaning?

1. We often rush to define the meaning of Christmas by resorting to traditional expressions we repeat, such as joy, family, peace, reconciliation and other expressions that, although true, no longer prompt us to think further and deeper. These terms and descriptions have become a barrier between us and Jesus, whom alone is the source of inspiration, allowing us to determine what He wants us to say about His Birth and what was His intention and underlying meaning.

2. The spiritual and civic leaders of the "Sons of the Promise" of the days of Jesus rejected the idea and the fact that Christ the Saviour had already come, and still refuse Him today. They were content to talk about the Saviour and His coming, using prophecies and the most sacred expressions in preparation for this coming. But, having already achieved this, they met Him with rejection and denial, and proved that the terms they used to preach the coming of the Saviour were only words from their lips and far from their hearts and faith. The difference between them and us today is that they did not believe in the

Saviour, but we do. However, the common denominator remains those same lofty expressions that we use and repeat on the occasion of Christmas. But we should be aware not to repeat these expressions on our lips without believing in our hearts the true faith, and the recognition of Christ who came and will come.

3. Christmas is therefore the getting out of our own selves to meet the One who has emptied Himself for us, to come and meet us. It is to abandon the expressions and images we used to determine the meaning of Christmas, and then enter into the Mystery of God Himself, who revealed Himself to us in Jesus, "the light of his glory and the image of his essence" (Heb 1/3). It is to listen deeply to His will, today and every day, to His knowledge, peace and love, thereby becoming aware of what is right to say as an expression of "the cause of hope in us" (1 Peter 3:15) in response to the needs and expectations of our world.

4. Wherever Jesus is there, blessing and grace shall be present, and everything shall be beautiful, blessed and new. How can we say that Jesus was born in a "pitiful manger"? The house is not measured by its physical or aesthetic value, but it is measured by the value of its inhabitants. Nor should we consider the poor as poor and weak, and use similar expressions to provoke compassion by describing their situation! But if we look at them through Jesus himself, do we not realize that they are actually stronger and richer than we think and say about them, as long as Jesus fills their hearts and forms the living axis of their lives and desires? Are we not sometimes lacking in the presence of Jesus in our consciences as long as we are still in the orbit of our thoughts and words and our limited and imperfect judgments, whenever Christmas falls on us? So, as we have said above: We must abandon ourselves and enter into the thought and logic of God to be able to give the true meaning of Christmas just as dictated by the

Divine Child and not as we used to explain it without deepening and listening to the word of God Himself.

5. Our mission at Christmas is not only with the poor and the oppressed, but also reaches beyond these traditional addresses, which the world awakens in particular during Christmas time. These in fact are often rich as long as Jesus is present in their hearts. They do not need us to wake up once a year to visit them and offer material help that is often not enough for one day's food! Our mission, as the Divine Child wishes, is a distinctive radiation towards every human being, without distinction, and to attract, with the truth and good example, along with the poor, also the rich of this world; those who find it hard to enter the Kingdom of God; those whom we stand in front of, compromising the Word of God, either because we are afraid to lose their esteem or because we would like to ensure the continuity of their material donations.

6. Jesus made himself equal to all of us by His Birth, to teach us that equality of dignity and truth among human beings, which is the fundamental basis for building the Kingdom of God in this world and in the Hereafter. And any favouritism or distinction, discrimination and preference, occurring on the basis of the world's logic and materialism, will contribute directly or indirectly in the obstruction and growth of the word of God and his kingdom.

7. We pray that we will be inspired by the Divine Child to get out of our own selves and walk towards Him with sincere openness to His inspiration; to not lose the way and to not be distracted by superficial matters and appearances, lest we sink again in the monotone of expressions that we repeat in a serious tone, even if unconvinced, and enter "the wide door"(Matthew 7: 13-14), through which every lazy, superficial and empty souls enters.

**Christ the Son of David was born, and with Him the
good hope for the sons of men,**

Hallelujah
The Bishops and representatives of the Apostolic Eastern
Churches in Australia and New Zealand