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Christmas Letter 2022

Friends, this Christmastide of 2022, as we commemorate the birth of our Saviour once again, the precious traditions we observe seem more than ever in stark and jarring contrast to the realities in the world around us at this time. The cribs, for instance, which we lovingly set up in our churches and our homes, seem to fly in the face of the unwelcoming world into which babies are born in war zones, and the harsh realities that cause people to flee from their homelands.

However, we must remind ourselves that the first Christmas was hardly an occasion made for private or public celebration, and that it happened during times of political uncertainty and tensions; in other words, in times and settings not so alien to those we find ourselves in today. Those who found their way to the stable 'rude and bare' were the untutored shepherds, recipients of the heavenly message: "Unto you is born this day...a Saviour". And in due course arrived the Wise Men from foreign parts who had read the signs of the times, and knew nothing more urgent than to undertake the arduous journey in order that they may pay homage to the vulnerable child in a manger. Simple shepherds and the most learned divined the mystery of the incarnation in the midst of privations, growing tensions and conflict, power struggles, innocent suffering, greed, hate, and despair. This is what our cribs at Christmas along with our celebrations bear witness to. We pray that this presence of Christ in their midst may be experienced by our sisters and brothers in all situations of peril, loneliness and exposure.

This year we once again remember that at the first Christmas God's exceptional intervention by becoming human was on behalf of all humankind in order that we be reconciled with God and one another. May each one of us hear the compelling call to reconciliation and an end to enmity and strife. The angels sang "Peace on earth and good will to all people". The Church has through the years been called upon to practice and proclaim this intervention of God through Christ. *"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation"* (2.Cor.5;11). To quote Bishop Duleep de Chickera, the former Bishop of Colombo: "We are called to co-operate with Christ as agents of reconciliation by being generous in our judgements, forgiving in our disputes, self-critical in our arrogance, and endowed with a consistent loving kindness, offering whatever we can to our refugee brothers and sisters, in whom we see the person of Jesus Christ." Let us offer the precious gifts of love, sacrifice and compassion to the Child Christ born in Bethlehem by imitating his tender mercy. And let us worship him with the angels, the wise men and the shepherds, as we proclaim, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill to all people" (Luke 2:14).

With warm greetings for a blessed Christmas and a New Year 2023 which brings peace and the spread of goodwill.

Yours in Christ
Leslie Nathaniel