

Lambeth Palace, SE1 7JU

CHRISTMAS 1977

Your Holiness,

Beloved Brother in Christ

"O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord"

These words form part of the chorus of one of the hymns most often sung by the faithful of the Church of England in the Christmas season. They echo the words of the shepherds to each other after the good news of the birth of Jesus Christ had been announced to them by an angel: "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass". (St. Luke 2:15)

The Evangelist St. Luke goes on to describe how the shepherds hastened to Bethlehem and found there Mary and Joseph and the Child who had been born to them. St. Matthew in his narrative describes the visit of those who are traditionally called the "wise men from the east" who came to Jerusalem seeking their new King, for, as they said, "we have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him". (St. Matthew 2:2)

So it is that people poor and rich, old and young, throughout the Christian era have heard the news of the birth of their Saviour with delight, and have hurried to adore the Infant born for them in Bethlehem. Their desire to worship may lead them to make a long pilgrimage or they may join in adoration with other faithful believers nearer home. Wherever they may be, their joy is the same.

As the time of the celebration of the birth of the Christ-child arrives again, we greet you Your Holiness in the joy of celebration. We pray that this joy may not be ours and yours only as we kneel in adoration at the crib of Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem, but may continue with us and the faithful of our Churches in the year which lies ahead. May this year be in a special way a year of the Prince of Peace and may His peace be seen throughout the world which He came to save.

With warmest greetings in His Name,

Your affectionate Brother in Christ,

DONALD CANTUAR

Archbishop of Canterbury

Primate of All England and Metropolitan

His Holiness Yeghishe Derderian,
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