

Nativity Epistle 2010

Beloved brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of Christ's Church,
my dear Christians,

Christ is born! The angels praise His birth on high, above the cave they give glory to God in the highest and proclaim His peace upon the earth. The shepherds of Bethlehem worship the Babe born in a manger, wondering at what they have seen and heard on this holy night. Having journeyed from their distant orient, the wise men bring gifts to the One Whom the whole of creation has awaited through all eternity, and Whom they have so zealously sought. Before departing this life, the righteous Symeon with love receives in his arms Him, Whom in faith and hope he has patiently awaited his whole life.

The One awaited throughout the ages has come and brought light to the world! The pre-eternal God has become incarnate from a pure Virgin!
Christ is born!

The shepherds, who were close by, received the good tidings from the angels. The other people of Bethlehem were also nearby, but either, because of their indifference did not heed the angels, or perhaps they closed their hearts as they had closed their doors, and made themselves incapable of seeing the angels, incapable of hearing them.

The wise men lived far off and did not have the benefit of the Holy Scriptures, but, with their whole heart they sought Him as they could, and when the Lord sent them the star, they did not hesitate to follow it. Everyone saw the star, but not all followed it, not all sought the Saviour of the world. There were also some, such as Herod, who did seek Him,

but not for the sake of worshipping Him.

Symeon knew the Scriptures, and lived in prayer, awaiting his Saviour, and the Lord told him in the Spirit of His coming. At the temple, everyone knew the Scriptures, everyone, one assumes, prayed, but no-one except the righteous Symeon and Anna awaited the Lord, received the Lord.

The Son of God was born in Bethlehem 2000 years ago, but He is also perpetually born in His Church until the end of time. Just as 2000 years ago the shepherds came and worshipped Him, so, also now, there are those who in His Church come and worship Him, but there are also those who are indifferent to Him, and those who close the doors of their hearts.

Just as 2000 years ago the magi from far off sought the Saviour and travelled their difficult path to find Him, so also today, there are those who are born far from Christ's Church, but diligently seek her, and once they find her, come to her, bringing gifts to their Saviour. There are also those who, like Herod, feign pious intentions but work toward the destruction of Christ's Church, sowing schism and dissent.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us choose the good part - with the shepherds, let us keep watch; with the angels, let us sing praise; with the wise men, let us spare no effort to come and worship, and in the Holy Mysteries, with the righteous Symeon, let us receive the Saviour Who for our sake was born this day.

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

John, Bishop of Caracas and South America