



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God
Saint Louis Abbey
January 1, 2004 9:00 a.m.

Mary treasured all these things, the Gospel for this feast tells us, Mary treasured all these things, and pondered them in her heart. What things? All the extraordinary things that had begun to happen to her, that had begun to be said to her, since she had said "Yes" to the angel's invitation at her Annunciation, since she had surrendered her whole life, her whole self, to God. Let these things come back to your mind and your heart. First then, as soon as she had said to the angel, "I am the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to your word", as soon as she had said this, she found herself hastening into the hill country of Judea, to her cousin Elizabeth, for the love of God, always in her heart, but now a love "beyond all telling", as the liturgy says of it, this extraordinary love, which could never permit her to think of herself before she thought of others, impelled her to go speedily to the aid of her aged cousin who, by the extraordinary power of God, had conceived a son and was now in her sixth month. Then, extraordinarily, the moment she arrived at Elizabeth's house, as soon as Elizabeth heard her greeting, the baby in her womb leapt for joy. Again, a wonder: Elizabeth was filled with Holy Spirit, and spoke these extraordinary words: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how is it that the mother of my Lord has come to me?' 'The mother of my Lord' -- what could this mean? Then, in what must have been the most pure yet most powerful inspiration, Mary herself spoke marvelous words: 'My soul, filled with the wonder of God, rejoices to proclaim the Lord my Savior. He has looked with mercy on his humble servant, now all generations will call me blessed. For in me the Almighty has done great things, holy is his name.' Then there had been the long and difficult journey to Bethlehem, in the very last days of her pregnancy, in order to satisfy the demands of a foreign power; there had been all the confusion and difficulty of the crowds, there had been no room for them at the inn; when at last the birth came, she was in a stable, and could find only a manger for a crib -- yet, somehow, even the ox and the donkey which were there seemed to be given understanding. Then, what we hear of today: the arrival of shepherds, total strangers to her and to her husband, who had been searching for the child, for her and her husband and the child, who, when they found them, yet again spoke extraordinary words, about an angel and angels, about a great joy for all people, about a Savior being born, who is the Christ, who is the Lord, about glory in the highest, about peace upon the earth. What could it mean? 'The Savior, the Savior . . .', 'The Mother of the Savior'; 'The Lord, the Lord . . .', 'The Mother of the Lord'. She pondered in her heart, she pondered in her heart, and as she pondered, on this day, and in the days and days to come, she grew ever deeper, ever quieter, ever holier. I say that there is a call to each one of us on this Our Lady's great feast day, a call to each one of us to give over our life, our self, to God, as Our Lady gave over her life, her self. What wonders he would work in our life, as he worked in her life; how he would transform our lives, as he transformed her life; how he would make us to be Christ-bearers, as he made her to be the Christ-bearer. Yes, we do this only by the grace of God, and yes, we do this only according to the measure of the grace God has given us. Yet, could not each one of us, today, take one step, one little step, toward a further handing over of our self and our life to God, a



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handing over that goes further than any handing over we have made before? Only one little step, and how immediately, how generously, how abundantly God would respond, what depths of the riches of the wonder of God's working in our life there would be for us to contemplate, to ponder in our heart. Holy men and women have often found the little step to take by praying this one, this extremely simple, prayer: 'Come, Holy Spirit!' 'Come, Holy Spirit!' They always pray it in the context of the guidance of the Church, of faithfulness to the teaching of the Church, and after all, it is the Holy Spirit who guides the Church; they always pray it in the context of the guidance afforded by the needs of others, and it is the Holy Spirit who makes us aware of the needs of others. But, in these contexts, it is a most powerful prayer. For as it was by the Holy Spirit that Mary conceived Christ in her womb, and had, indeed, conceived him before that in her mind and heart; so it is by the Holy Spirit that each of us conceives him in our mind and heart. 'Come, Holy Spirit.' Pray that today. Then listen carefully to hear what you are told, watch carefully to see what you are shown.