



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



The Solemnity of Christmas December 25, 2005

"Today is born to you in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" -- the proclamation of the angel to the shepherds very early on the first Christmas morning, as we have just heard in the Gospel.

On this Christmas morning we celebrate the temporal birth of the Lord Jesus Christ two thousand years ago: "And Mary gave birth to her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger . . ." We celebrate his eternal birth from the Father in the splendors of the Godhead: "The Lord said to my Lord: You are my Son; this day have I begotten you." But we celebrate also a third birth of Our Lord, the birth for which Advent has been particularly preparing us, the birth which occurs every Christmas and so which occurs this Christmas morning of 2005: it is the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Church, his birth in those who are the members of the Body of Christ, so his birth in the souls of each of us here, and in the souls of all throughout the world, who receive him on this day having confessed their sins and opened their hearts in faith and love: "The kindness and generous love of God has appeared, saving all . . . justifying us . . . making us heirs in hope of eternal life."

This spiritual birth of Our Lord is by way of the grace which he pours into our souls, through his Word, through his Eucharist, with special abundance on Christmas, and on each day of the Christmas season. In this spiritual birth he comes to us as the Savior, the one who liberates us from our sins; he comes to us as the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed King who is the Son of David and whose Kingdom of peace will have no end; he comes to us as Priest, who gives us a share in his divine life; he comes to us as Teacher, who gives us light; he comes to us as Ruler, who leads us on his way of love. He comes to us as Lord, the only-begotten Son of God, who makes us participators in the divine nature, who causes us to be reborn as sons and daughters of God, as brothers and sisters of himself, as the Temple of the Holy Spirit. In short, as the Fathers of the Church tell us that we must say if we are to express, insofar as we can in human language, the mystery of Christmas, in short, he, the Son of God, becomes man, and comes to us, in order that we might become God.

"The Word of God became man that we might become God." When at last we grasp this deepest meaning of the angel's message, perhaps after many years of wandering from the way, of suffering, of sorrow, when at last we grasp the angel's message, then there is born in our hearts a joy which no fear, no suffering, no one, nothing, can ever take from us; when at last we grasp the message, then we understand why the angel says, "Be not afraid! I bring you news of a great joy which shall be for all the people"; when at last we grasp the message, we cannot but intend that the rest of our life should be a bringing of this joy to others, we cannot but, with the shepherds, go to Bethlehem, and see this word which the Lord has spoken, and make known the message which has been told us to all who will listen, glorifying and praising God.



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Dear friends, on this holy night of Christmas, as with the ears of our spirit we hear the angels' voices on the night air, let our voices, in the joy of our hearts, blend with theirs:

Glory to God in the highest
and peace to his people on earth!