



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Homily for December 23 Fr. Laurence

The prayer that the Church assigns to the 23rd of December is one of the most beautiful, at least in the Latin, of the prayers of the liturgy. It is in three parts. It begins, "Almighty and eternal God, as the birth of your Son according to the flesh draws near..." We are at the brink of the Christmas feast, but not yet there. Even tomorrow on Christmas Eve we will begin to feel the dawn of salvation, but tonight we are still in the dark, and the Church takes this opportunity to look ahead to the meaning, the purpose of the whole Christmas celebration.

"...we ask that the Word who became flesh of the Virgin Mary and dwelt among us..." We are asking that the the Incarnate Word, the Son of God, do something for us, not that the Father do it. And what is it we ask that he will do?

"...may bestow mercy on us your unworthy servants." We ask that the Son of God made flesh may show mercy. Here is the whole Christian economy: mercy is given to the world in a human being, the Word made flesh, the one who would say: "Your sins are forgiven." The one who told the story of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the Prodigal Son. Who said, "What I want is mercy not sacrifice" and "Neither do I condemn you." He shed his blood so that sins might be forgiven and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins. Finally he enjoined on his disciples the command to "forgive your brother from your heart" as he forgave us. The Body of Christ is the dwelling place of mercy, the reservoir of mercy for every human being. The birthday of Christ is the birthday of mercy.