



Office of the Metropolitan Archbishop  
The Archdiocese of the Southeastern States and Missionary Dependencies  
The Evangelical Orthodox Catholic Church in America



Presiding Archbishop-Abbot  
Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos  
"Benedictines of Mary, Old Catholic Marianists"

Most Reverend Doctor Robert Francis Jangro, O.S.S.T.

November 27, 2020  
Friday of the Thirty-Fourth, or Last, Week in Ordinary Time

To: All the Faithful in Christ

SUBJECT: A Message and Meditation from the Presiding Archbishop - Abbot for Advent and Christmas 2020

The Christmas spirit is upon us once again. The season where we rekindle within our hearts the great mystery of Christ's incarnation by which "though He was in the form of God, did not deem equality with God, something to be grasped at. Rather He took the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself and became obedient even unto death, death on a cross." (Philippians 2:6-8) The great Saint Augustine of Hippo spoke about this and said: "The Divine became flesh so that we, who are flesh may become divine."

We begin, first and foremost with the season of Advent in which we are being invited to prepare for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, not just in Bethlehem but most especially, in the manger of our own soul. We are called to re-examine our own selves and make our hearts, though as unworthy as the cave of Bethlehem, a place of consolation for the Christ Child. A place of great revolution from which the King is born in an unexpected place and in an unexpected time.

At the heart of the season, we will celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is very significant to the life and history of The Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos - "The Benedictines of Mary, Old Catholic Marianists". That day, we will honor the great Mother of God, who at the first moment of her conception was saved from the curse of the ancient sin of our first parents. The Mother who became the vessel of honor that brings to humanity our dignity and our eternal life. Through Mary, God prepared for us a dwelling worthy of the coming of His Son in this world.

The season of Advent teaches us that it is not just about our own preparations for the coming glorious celebration. Most especially, we are initially reminded that at the beginning of time there was a God who has loved us immensely and prepared for us a place for the coming of His Son who will save us from the

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darkness of sin and death. Prepare to be changed by this love, the incarnate Son of God. Jesus, who is a great revolutionary who challenges all of us through his words and actions. Likewise, we are challenged during this time to pay attention to the word incarnate that will change our hearts and minds.

Therefore, the season is a constant reminder for all of us about God's merciful and steadfast love, unceasing and new every moment of our lives. We are all called to love, and to love is to give ourselves for others. We are reminded that it was not our own works, but it is God's initiative that He comes to us all because of love. This great love of God challenges us to have a change of heart, it moves us toward conversion. We see changes in our Order today from policies to change of assignments, to revisiting our formation and envisioning our path. These are all movement of God's creating hands inspiring us to move forward and not to hold back. To bring our cooperation and to truly trust God's inspiration through our leaders. Furthermore, God's love is like a gentle rain that flows continuously through us. It does not stay in one place lest it becomes stagnant. Love must flow to us, and through our mission and constant remembrance of Jesus' Paschal Mystery, to rehydrate a dying world of dryness and indifference.

The Christmas season is a remembrance and a memorial of Christ's Paschal Mystery through the Word becoming flesh and "pitching his tent" among us. As Christ was made incarnate in the womb of the Blessed Mother, we return to the upper room where Christ has assumed Himself, body, blood, soul, and divinity, into the form of bread and wine. We return to the center of our charism: The Holy Eucharist. As we await and celebrate the coming Christmas season, we are reminded of Christ's mandate at the last supper to "Do this in memory of me." There we have been given the command to remember Christ whenever we celebrate the sacred liturgy. Dear Brothers, Sisters, and Friends, to remember is not just to make it present through the figments of our imaginative mind but to make alive and flourishing in ourselves the presence of our Lord. As Christ assumed Himself into the flesh and has given up Himself in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, we are being invited to also assume into our flesh and to our whole being the Christ who once self-emptied Himself and became like one of us. As we daily receive the Lord in Holy Communion, we let ourselves be an abode of Jesus Christ.

We let ourselves be the constant incarnation of Jesus Christ in the flesh for the life of the world. As Saint Teresa of Avila said,

*"Christ has no body now but yours.  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.  
Yours are the eyes through which He looks compassion on this world.  
Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good.  
Yours are the hands through which He blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are His body.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours."*

Receiving the Eucharist becomes for us a kenosis (self-emptying) wherein we die to ourselves and we let Christ live in us. Therefore, we must be ready to be chewed and crushed by the world. Making ourselves a living memorial of the Incarnation and the Eucharistic Mystery.

Have we allowed ourselves to be Christ's instruments of peace, order, and love, or are we like a stumbling block for the furthering of God's kingdom through our Order?

To remember is also to keep Christ's presence and give Him flesh in our missions as Benedictines of Mary. And this mission begins inside our local communities. Wherein we do not just adore and celebrate the Eucharist, but we learn to be Eucharist ourselves for the life of each member in the community. To be Eucharist is to be like the bread broken down and shared towards the other. May everything we do inside

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our communities be a living memorial of Christ-Incarnate. We must keep the love burning within the recesses of our community life because it is only with an authentic love that we can also authentically show the world that Christ is alive and continuously living amidst the world. To keep the memory of Christ is to always manifest that love which God has shown us from time immemorial as the renown scriptural passage goes: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him, will not perish but will have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

At the end of our Christmas celebration, we will commemorate Christ's baptism. As Jesus plunged himself in the Jordan river, we are reminded not just of the sanctification of the waters of Jordan, but of our own calling to submerge ourselves into the depth of humanity in need of God's presence. Nowadays, we are called religious to be empathetic individuals more than being moral exemplars imposing our lists of do's and don'ts. As a religious and as a Benedictine, most especially, we are called to be a life-giver in which, conformed to the Paschal Mystery of Christ, we learn to assume and share the feelings of the other as Christ did in his Incarnation and Baptism. Like Jesus, we must have a heart that listens and understands.

In baptism we are conformed in Christ, sharing a common priesthood with him. And in the profession of vows, we are more perfectly conformed in Christ, not only through the evangelical counsels but through the mission that we are supposed to undertake. Because of God's loving mercy, heaven cannot hold Him anymore and He left behind His throne as king and quietly comes into the world who is sleeping. He comes to us as a challenge to step out from our comfort zones and be witnesses to the ends of the earth, to every culture and nation, of His loving mercy and compassion.

It is well and fitting that we end the celebration of Christmas with the baptism of Jesus. Because through His baptism, He was given a mission that we too are mandated to follow in His memory.

My dear brothers and sisters, let us not remain around the manger happily gazing at the lovely mystery. Let us challenge ourselves to leave the manger empty and go out of the cave of Bethlehem to the hill of Calvary until we witness the empty tomb. Let us go with the shepherds and kings who, after contemplating the Christ Child, left the stable and went out to all the world, proclaiming to them what they had witnessed.

The time will come when the angels will cease singing and the stars in the sky will be gone. The Christmas celebration will be over soon but conformed to the image of Jesus Christ and filled with the bread of heaven, we have a mission to begin and continue the work of Christmas. The work to proclaim Christ and go with Christ to the poor and the abandoned, to the hungry and the broken, to the peripheries and margins of society. Let us carry on the mission to spread the Christmas message of God's love and merciful compassion by becoming faithful to the teachings of Christ and being strengthened by the Paschal Mystery, doing everything in His memory.

Let me greet you during this very season of Advent, a blessed preparation for the gift of Christ. Empty yourselves and be filled with God, the Emmanuel, the God who is with us! My blessed greetings also of the Merriest Christmas to all our communities, to your families, to your loved ones and your friends. I bless you and keep you close in my prayers as we welcome the Baby who brings forth the change in our sinful world.

Oh, blessed infant Jesus as you come into our world may we be united to your youthful enthusiasm to save us and abandon the old sinful ways so we may be ever united in your work of mercy through our mission and vocation as Benedictines of Mary, Old Catholic Marianists.

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May all of us be blessed!

Faithfully and Fondly Your Servant in Christ through Mary,

*Dom ++ Robert*

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