



The Marian Journal

Keeping members and friends of the
Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos informed.

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS EDITION

December 2009

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**'For to us a child
is born
to us a son is
given,
and the
government will
be on his
shoulders.
And he will be
called
Wonderful
Counselor, Mighty
God,
Everlasting
Father, Prince of
Peace.'
Isa 9:6**



Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos
(Ordo Sanctissimae Theotokos, O.SS.T.)

Three O.SS.T. Members Make Professions and a New Postulant Joins the Order

On Tuesday, December 8, 2009, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, three members of the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos made professions and took monastic vows becoming the Order's first Ascetic Monks:

Sister Susan Loretta Doyle, O.SS.T. from Roanoke, Virginia made her Final (Perpetual) Solemn Profession and took the three traditional evangelical monastic vows.

Sister Sherie Jane Mercier, O.SS.T. from Mayer, Arizona made her Final (Perpetual) Solemn Profession and took the three traditional evangelical monastic vows.

Bishop-Abbot Robert Francis Jangro, O.SS.T. also made his Final (Perpetual) Solemn Profession and took the three traditional evangelical monastic vows.

Joining the Order's Brothers and Sisters on this very special day was our newest member:

John Alban Bene't Pendlebury from Lancashire, United Kingdom made his Promise as a Postulant.

Congratulations to all the charter members of the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos on this wonderful occasion, and welcome to our new member "from across the pond".

Note: We will include a biography on each of the Order's members in the next issue of The Marian Journal.





To learn more,
visit the **ESBVM**
web site at
www.esbvm.org.uk/



*"It is Christmas
every time you let
God love others
through you. Yes,
it is Christmas
every time you
smile at your
brother and offer
him your hand."
~Mother Teresa*



*"And she gave
birth to her
firstborn son and
wrapped him in
swaddling cloths
and laid him in a
manger, because
there was no
place for them in
the inn." ~Luke
2:7*



O.S.S.T. Becomes a Proud Member of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary (ESBVM)

The Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary (ESBVM) exists to advance the study at various levels of the place of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Church, under Christ and of related theological questions; and in the light of such study to promote ecumenical devotion. Its aim is to show that, in the Blessed Virgin Mary, Christians of many traditions may find a focus in their search for unity.

Prayer for the Society - God our Father, through the Blessed Virgin Mary you gave your Son to be our Redeemer; send your blessing on the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary; so that strengthened by your grace, enlivened by your Spirit, and renewed in the One whom Mary bore, your Church may grow in the unity You desire. We ask this through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord.

The Meaning of Christmas

What is the true meaning of Christmas? It is a perennial question. It is a question heard often during the Christmas season year after year, from pulpits, TV personalities, newspaper writers, and just ordinary people bewildered by the hectic pace of the season. It seems a little strange that as popular as this season seems to be, we should continually have to ask that question. The meaning of Christmas seems to be forever in danger of being obscured by all the commotion and promotion of the season. Perhaps we continue to ask the question for fear that the answer will be lost, or already is lost, in the shuffle.

So, the search for the true meaning of Christmas is a recurring one. And yet, too often the answers we provide, even from the church, are more sentimentality, comfortable traditions, or "warm fuzzies" than they are any deep reflection on the significance of the Incarnation for humanity. As much as those things are a part of the season, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus" is not the meaning of the season. It is not about the "spirit of giving" or the quest for global peace, or the importance of family, or the beauty of a snow-decorated "silent night."

Certainly we can immediately say that Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus. But exactly why is that fact so significant beyond the affirmation of a historical fact or a creedal confession? How does, or how should, the meaning of Christmas impact our lives on a daily basis as the people of God?

Perhaps for an answer, we need to return to the biblical narratives, apart from all the traditions that we have heaped around them to make them more entertaining and more coherent to modern ways of thinking. At the heart of the nativity narratives in both Matthew and Luke, is a simple fact: amid the struggle of a people who had longed for 500 years for God to act in the world in new ways, God came to be with them in a way that totally identified himself with us, as human beings. Amid the most unlikely of circumstances, to the most unlikely of people, God became a human being to reconcile all peoples to himself (2 Cor 5:18-19).

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Christmas is a glorious time of the year, simple in origin, deep in meaning, beautiful in tradition and custom, rich in memories, and charitable in spirit.



When we have the spirit of Christmas, we remember Him whose birth we commemorate at this season of the year.



The true meaning of Christmas is about possibility in the midst of the impossible. It is not the kind of possibility that comes from a confidence in our own skill, knowledge, ability, or a positive mental attitude. It is possibility that comes solely from the fact that God is God, and that he is the kind of God who comes into our own human existence to reveal himself and call us to himself. It is a possibility that is so surprising at its birth that we are caught unaware, and so are left with wonder at the simplicity of its expression in this infant child. It is a possibility that is easily symbolized by a helpless infant that has nothing of its own by which to survive; yet an infant that, because he is Immanuel, God with us, will forever change the world and all humanity. It is this same God who has promised to be with us, with his people, with the church and with us individually, as we live as his people in the world.

It is not just hope, as if it were wishful thinking that things will get better when they cannot. It is hope incarnated into flesh, a hope that can be held in a mother's arms, a hope that expresses a reality that will live beyond endings and death itself. It is the hope, the possibility, that springs from impossible and insignificant beginnings, infused with the power of God through the Holy Spirit, that will blossom into a light to the nations.

It is this possibility, this God, that we celebrate at Christmas. And we do so with a confidence born, not of our own desire for it to be so, but from the birth of a child over 2,000 years ago, a child who was the Son of God!

Considering Mary at Christmas

Mary was the first to receive Christ, in a space that was created by God and not of her own capacity. This is how all of us must receive Christ. Our "yes" to God matters, as did Mary's "be it unto me according to Thy word." Indeed it was according to the Word himself. Yet her role remains as recipient; her "yes" was a response and not a precursor of God's activity. We follow Mary ever mindful of the primacy of God's revelation. It is the picture of the incarnation, and it is here we must ponder Mary's role. The angels are welcoming the child Jesus with a musical chorus. Mary is pictured twice. She is the mother who holds the child and indirectly beholds the light of the Father in the infant's face. She also appears as the recipient of grace, representing all who come before and after her, leading the Church in adoration of Christ. We stand facing a mystery, a mystery which has come and dwelt with us by divine freedom and grace. There are things we can and must do in light of the glory in the face of Christ which has encountered us. As with Mary, we point to the mystery, we point to this glory with praise on our lips.

As Christmas approaches, it is fitting for all of us to ponder this picture of Mary. In her we are reminded of the greatest miracle of Christmas – not the virgin birth, but what it signifies, that in Christ God became man and is still willing to enter into our humanity. It is this mystery we proclaim with Mary at Christmas. Through her, we are first of all recipients. Hers was the first "yes" to Christ, and we echo her acceptance. Hers was the first hymn of praise to the Word become Flesh, and we join in adoration. Hers was the first pointing away from empty humanity to the fullness of God's revelation in Christ. We are invited to stand with her and with the heavenly orchestra, giving our only fitting response as those blessed of God:

"For the Mighty One has done great things for me;
And holy is His name."



Christmas is more than trees and twinkling lights, more than toys and gifts and baubles of a hundred varieties. It is love. It is the love of the Son of God for all mankind. It is magnificent and beautiful.

Our Lady of Peace Abbey, Atlanta, GA.

Our Lady of Solitude Abbey, Mayer, AZ

Our Lady of Divine Providence Abbey, Roanoke, VA

Lancashire, U.K.

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***We're on the Web!
www.osst-abbey.org***

A Message from the Abbot

Dear O.SS.T. Family and Friends,

~ *Totus Tuus* ~ "Totally Yours"

Someone recently said to me, "You can always make more money but you can never make more time." Although this is not the most sophisticated or profound statement I have ever heard, it does possess an element of insight and truth that reflects the longing of many of our hearts: "I need more time."

It seems that in our hectic and frenzied lives, we can never find enough time. We are always on the go, busy and balancing countless demands. In fact we all know people who like to brag about how busy they are, and how much they have to do. They almost see their stress as a badge of honor or a testimony of their importance. We also know that these people almost certainly will hit the proverbial wall and their lives will start to come unraveled. Don't allow this person to be you!

The Christmas season is a time to refocus, slow down, and prioritize the things that mean the most to us. It is a time to reflect on our spiritual wellbeing as well as our family's strength and resilience.

Please join our O.SS.T. community this Christmas season as you take some time to refocus, slow down and reprioritize that which is really important.

Wishing You God's Peace and Abundant Blessings,

Dom+Robert - Bishop-Abbot, O.SS.T.

