

From This Holy Mountain

A Publication of the Dominican Nuns of St. Dominic's Monastery - Linden, Virginia - Winter 2020 Issue

*"O Radiant Dawn,
Splendor of Eternal Light,
Sun of Justice, come and shine
on those who dwell in darkness
and in the shadow of death."*

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A Message of Great Joy*

You and your intentions will be remembered
in a novena of Masses celebrated in our
monastery chapel during the Christmas season.

Thank you for your faithful support.





Dear Friends,

“Wake up, O man-it was for you that God was made man! Eternal death would have awaited you, had He not been born in time. You would not have come to life again, had He not come to die your death. You would have perished, had He not come.”

These stirring words from a Christmas homily of St. Augustine echo that familiar line of St. Leo the Great from the Matins reading for this glorious feast, “Christian, remember your dignity!” It was, indeed, for us that God became one of us. “God loved the world so much, He gave us His only Son.” (Jn. 3:16) So great was our dignity in the eyes of God!

We look at this world which God has entered as man and continually surrounds with His love and mercy. We see the ever-increasing disregard for the sanctity of human life at all stages, which permeates our society, claiming it as a choice rather than accepting it as a gift from God. Today, we are witnessing the ongoing threat of the pandemic, the increasing violence and division in our country and the continuing attack on marriage and family life.

Could not the thought of all this lead to certain discouragement or even to despair, or to think that God has abandoned us and that evil is prevailing? Without the reality of Christmas, yes, we would be without hope! But God has come. He has spoken. Death and evil will be vanquished. Evil is not more powerful than good. God will have the last word, for in the end, “God will be all in all.” (1 Cor. 15:28)

Gazing upon the Divine Babe in the manger, could it have even entered the mind of man that the plan of God before time began was now being revealed to our human eyes? Who could have ever imagined that this tiny, helpless newborn would be the Source of our salvation and redemption? Didn't Christ hanging on the cross seem like a total failure, that the plan of God had somehow gone wrong? Didn't all seem lost to the Apostles huddled in fear in the Upper Room? The plan of God is mysterious and incomprehensible to our human minds, “for who has known the mind of the Lord?” (Rom. 11:34) We cannot allow ourselves to be fooled by appearances. God is at work redeeming the world He loves. Christmas assures us of this truth! God has entered our world and it is forever changed. He would not have given Himself to us so completely, only to leave us orphans.

Whatever challenges, uncertainties or sufferings we face in our lives this Christmas, “Let us learn from Mary and Joseph. Let us place ourselves with faith at the service of God's plan. Even if we do not understand it fully, let us entrust ourselves to His wisdom and goodness. Let us seek first of all the Kingdom of God and Providence will help us. A Blessed Christmas to all!” (Pope Emeritus Benedict's Dec. 20, 2009 Angelus Address)

With our constant prayer,

Sr. Mary Fidelis, OP

Prioress





CHRISTMAS CAROLS BY THE CRÈCHE

Remembering Sr. Marie Thérèse

*O*ur crèche in chapel always reminds us of our beloved Sr. Marie Thérèse (1927-2010). Sister loved singing Christmas carols by the Crib when left alone to pray, particularly in her final years. There she sang to her Lord, parked up close in her wheelchair. Her dementia relieved her, by that point, of those inhibitions which perhaps keep most adults from indulging in such child-like freedom at prayer. Nevertheless, those blessed to have known Sr. Marie Thérèse can tell you it wasn't mere lack of inhibition which prompted Sister's caroling. It was love.

Sister knew she was loved. Her parents made sure of that. Their family farm in Wisconsin formed the backdrop of Sister's early years where she played and worked

with her nine siblings. Though she was the only dwarf in her family, she was treated like everyone else, and thus matured in her an indomitable spirit which enabled her to meet life's challenges with confidence and creativity.

In time, this farmer's daughter heard God's call to the cloister and with characteristic generosity, she set her hand to the plow and never looked back. She desired to give her life entirely to God out of love for Him and for the salvation of souls. What prompted her? Love. Love had freed Sister to give of herself without counting the cost.

Is this not the heart of every Christian vocation: to receive the gift of God's love and to become a gift in return? At Christmas, we contemplate the immense love of God, the Love made manifest in the Incarnation. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son" (Jn 3:16). May we, like Sr. Marie Thérèse, allow ourselves to be moved and transformed by His love this Christmas and so be freed to give of ourselves more fully to God and to those we meet.



Friends Spotlight:

A Providential Encounter

PHOTO: Spiering Photography - courtesy

Please consider joining our

St. Catherine de Ricci Guild

to help support the nuns
on a monthly basis.



Benefits of membership:

- A perpetual membership in the Monastery's Eucharistic Adoration Association, which includes a weekly Mass for your intentions and a daily remembrance in the prayers and good works of the nuns.
- An invitation to join the nuns for Vespers on a Sunday evening in the fall, an opportunity to meet and greet the nuns, followed by a wine and cheese reception at a nearby winery.

Visit our website for more details on how to register to make a monthly donation through Faith Direct:
www.lindenopnuns.org.

A few years ago, our Pastor, Fr. John De Celles, expressed his hope that his parishioners would offer some support to the good Dominican nuns in Linden. Shortly thereafter, my wife Beverly and I made a visit to the monastery, where we discovered an amazingly beautiful facility. We said a few prayers in their holy Chapel and met the wonderful Sister who answered the door.

A few months later, we were invited to a St. Catherine de Ricci Guild event at the monastery, during which we met the nuns in the parlor. Beverly, a cradle Catholic, grew up in Kansas, desiring from childhood to become a cloistered nun. God, however, had others plans as He introduced her to this Methodist from South Carolina (who became a Catholic after eleven years of marriage).

As I was not at all familiar with monastic life, I was completely overwhelmed when we met the entire community behind the grille. I later told Bev that I had never met such joy-filled persons. Every question was answered with smiles, enthusiasm, and a sincerity that made *me* want to join a cloister! Truly, God had called these nuns, and given them a life-long commitment to pray for others. We are blessed to call the sisters our friends!

Col. Bob and Beverly Ward are parishioners at St. Raymond of Peñafort in Springfield, Virginia

To Us a Son is Given

Receiving the Gift of Christmas Day



*"St. Catherine holding the Infant Jesus
is more than just a sweet story.
Her Christmas experience
reveals something about our own."*

The Mass introit for Christmas Day is taken from the prophet Isaiah: "For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given." Thanks be to God who has given us the gift of His Son. The saints understood this, perhaps, better than most. One such saint who came to know and experience the tremendous Gift of Christmas is the Dominican mystic, St. Catherine de Ricci.

As St. Catherine was praying on Christmas Day, 1540, the Mother of God appeared to her, holding the Holy Infant. Then, to her great wonder and joy, Mary held out her Son to the saint and allowed her to take Him into her arms. Surely, the memory of that Christmas remained forever stamped upon St. Catherine's heart. For, indeed, *to her* a Son was given.

The Church teaches that extraordinary signs and special graces, like the one St. Catherine experienced on Christmas, "are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift given to all" (CCC 2014). That means St. Catherine holding the Infant Jesus is more than just a sweet story. Her Christmas experience reveals something about our own. It is this: He whom she was blessed to hold in her arms, we, likewise, behold by our faith.

Similarly, He whom she received through the hands of Our Lady, we, too, receive through the hands of the priest. Let us, then, ask for the grace to receive the divine Gift of our Savior this Christmas with a renewed sense of wonder and joy, like that which filled the heart of St. Catherine de Ricci.

Contemplata Aliis Tradere

By Fr. Romanus Cessario, O.P.

“*O*ur Savior Jesus Christ, as the angel testified, *saves His people from their sins* (Mt 1:21) and demonstrates in Himself the truth which is the way to deathless happiness.” Thus writes Saint Thomas Aquinas in the Prologue to the third part of his *Summa Theologiae*. This message brings us two pieces of good news.

First, we learn that Christmas announces the birthday of a Savior. Although a joyful feast, the fact remains that sinners are those who should rejoice most in the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Eternal Word did not assume a visible human nature in order to make good people better. He became man, suffered and died for us, and rose from the dead in order to make a sinful world holy and complete.

Many people who find themselves caught up in sinful patterns of behavior, whether they are small sins or serious ones, tend to recoil from the Lord. Some call this reaction the “devil’s blackmail.” The Evil One wants us to forget that the angel told Mary that her Son would *save His people from their sins*. God, however, wants us to remember this truth. Recall that the Angelus Prayer provides daily reminders of the reason that God became man.

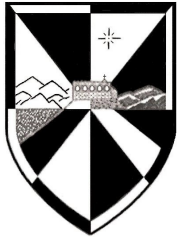
The other piece of good news reveals that the Babe of Bethlehem teaches those truths which lead to eternal life. Without the message of the Gospel, the world is lost. Without Gospel truth, those in the world suffer a great



deprivation. They can find no reliable way to happiness, here below or in the sweet hereafter.

Our Dominican nuns center their lives on the Incarnation and the good news that the Christmas mystery brings. They observe a life of penance that adds to the treasury of the Church from which sinners obtain satisfaction. Because we all belong to the one Body of Christ, all the baptized benefit from the Nuns’ voluntary sufferings, their fasts, vigils, cloister, etc. They also daily ponder the truths of the faith, and so become for us sure guides to living a happy life, no matter what our vocation in the Church.

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*“Behold, our Lord
will come with power
and will enlighten the eyes of
His servants.”*

Mass Times:

We regret that our monastery chapel is temporary closed to our lay faithful.

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**For Prayer Intentions
and Vocations Inquiries:**
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