

## Nativity of the Lord

My beloved brothers and sisters, on Thursday night, I got home from the Penance Service at about 9:30 pm. It was very dark in the hallway, and I had to grope my way across the hallway in order to find the door and the door knob to my room. I finally found it, and turned on the light, which for a moment was dazzling to my eyes. We are now in the darkest hours of the year, the 21<sup>st</sup> is the shortest day of the year; however, we are also living in the darkest hours of humanity and the world, and perhaps in the history faith. It is a time of unbelief, and there are so many who are groping their way through the darkness and cannot find their way. The great temptation is the temptation of despair; however, this feast day, and the Gospel remind us that the infinitely dazzling light of God has indeed been poured out into the darkness, it cannot be obscured by the darkness, and all of the Christmas lights and Christmas cribs we see around us, are the promise of God, that the darkness will not overcome the light!

My beloved brothers and sisters, our ideas are the cause of our behaviors. The idea we have of another person will affect how we relate to that person. If I think someone that I see might be dangerous, or odd, I will go out of my way to avoid them. On the other hand, if I see someone who looks suave and sophisticated, I will probably treat them with greater respect. Our idea of the person affects how I interact with them. In the same way, if I have only a nebulous idea of God, if I don't really believe that God is the God of the Universe, that He is Lord and Master, and I owe him my love and obedience; if I don't believe that He is the Lord of Infinite love and forgiveness, who has loved us so much that He took on human flesh from Mary, and became a human being like us; then probably, God makes no difference in my life. The quality of my relationship with God is based upon what I think God is like!

You and I have been created for a Communion with God, for a relationship of deepest intimacy with Him. God became a human being for us and was born a man 2000 years ago, because He desires to have an intimate relationship with us; but, we must have a right idea of God as He reveals Himself to us, if we are going to have a right relationship with Him. St. Luke tells us the story of the Birth of

God as a man, and in the story, he reveals to us the right idea we should have of Him: He was born in a Cave in Bethlehem- the city of David, who was His ancestor- He is a King, the gifts of the Magi underscore this truth- they recognize His Kingship, that He is also a High Priest , and He is God, and so they adore Him. He is wrapped in swaddling bands- He will be wrapped in swaddling bands again, after His terrible death, and laid in another cave, a tomb! He is laid in a manger, a feeding trough- He will be food for us- the bread of Life, the Holy Eucharist, to enter into the deepest union with us. He is manifested to shepherds, the poorest and most humble of men, who were considered unwashed and unclean sinners by the establishment, he has come for sinners and for the unclean. His birth is greeted by Angel choirs, this is the Lord and master of the Universe.

Christ Jesus still manifests Himself in the world today, He is present in His Church, a boat-load of sinners, and He is present in mystery in His Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and in Confession, wherein sinners are still reconciled to God! Jesus gives us God, because He is God- now, we are called to make up our minds about Him and the gift of intimacy He wants to give us!