

Homily: Christmas Day, 2020

In 1999, seven Cistercian nuns left their monastery in Iowa to re-establish a long abandoned ancient monastery in Norway. They describe their experiences of doing this in a new book, called; Northern Lights. In one chapter, reflecting on Christmas, Sister Maria Rafael Bartlett writes; "...As I walk along the stone-floor cloister to the church, I pass our smooth white statue of a young seated MARY and the small child JESUS, a naked toddler standing close beside HER. It reflects the tremendous fact that at the INCARNATION, GOD became a real human being. In our statue, JESUS is a normal little boy, his legs bent casually so that he leans informally, with an intimate familiarity, against HIS MOTHER. HE's not portrayed as a Haloed Figure of precocious wisdom, but as a real child. HIS nakedness, reveals HIS vulnerability and HIS proximity to an innocent babyhood. With the fertile fire of HIS OWN SPIRIT, GOD ignited a new life within the VIRGIN'S Womb: GOD HIMSELF entered HER Womb. Who could've imagined that the all-powerful GOD would accomplish so intimate an entry into human life?.....Who could've imagined that the All-Powerful GOD would accomplish so intimate an entry into human life?... In that moment, the world and what it means to be human changed forever. As St. Paul proclaims to Titus; "The Grace of GOD has appeared, saving all. And that literally means all. As St. Luke tells the story,

the Angel of the LORD appears to shepherds. Two thousand years ago, they weren't considered a part of respectable society. They weren't the most trustworthy and many of them didn't have very good reputations and for good reason. Yet, they're the first ones to hear the Good News of Great Joy. Sinners, though they may have been, the Glory of the LORD shone around them and although they were struck with great fear, they are assured: do not be afraid. A SAVIOR has been born for you WHO is CHRIST and LORD. Yes, in that moment, the world and what it means to be human changed forever. According to the Scripture Scholar Fr. Daniel Harrington: "At CHRISTMAS, we celebrate the fact that in JESUS of Nazareth, the WORD has become flesh and made HIS dwelling among us. In this way GOD has revealed not only WHO GOD is, but also who we are and what we can become." Through this SON, Named JESUS; all darkness and sin will be dispelled. HE is the fullness of Light that our GOD longs to give every people and nation. Through HIM, GOD Proclaims to each one of us; no matter how strong the darkness may seem, the Light will always be stronger. And don't we all need that message more than ever? This has obviously NOT been a good year. There's hardly anyone who can say their lives haven't been turned upside down in some way since last February or March. But Celebrating CHRISTMAS, we are reminded; although our lives and our world

have been in some pretty thick darkness lately, CHRIST our Light is stronger. How does it go? Don't tell GOD how strong the darkness is; tell the darkness how strong your GOD is. Remember what MARY was told at the Annunciation? Nothing will be impossible for GOD. Life's been weird there's no question about that. The fact that we're not in the church, but on the patio is weird, but the Celebration of the Mass, is the Celebration of CHRIST's Birth, Life, Death and RESURRECTION wherever it's celebrated and even though we are celebrating CHRISTMAS in a much different way than we ever have before; the Celebration is all the same. We're celebrating the Revelation and Confirmation that the bottom line of all life is Love. That's why we were created in the first place, that's why GOD wanted to save us from ourselves and why HE sent HIS SON to live among us. HIS Love has been revealed and confirmed in the birth of a baby; who came to earth as a simple child as we all did. HE didn't come in Glory and Majesty, but in fact, came to an average, but very holy couple in an insignificant town in an insignificant way. However insignificant we may be in the eyes of the world, Pope Francis reminded us several years ago, I believe, in his CHRISTMAS Homily; that we all have a significant role to play in revealing CHRISTMAS to the world: CHRISTMAS is you, when you decide to be born again each day and let GOD into your soul. The CHRISTMAS Tree is you, when you resist vigorous winds and

the difficulties of life. The CHRISTMAS decorations are you, when your virtues are colors that adorn your life. The CHRISTMAS Bell is you, when you call, gather and seek to unite. You are also a CHRISTMAS Light, when you illuminate with your life the path of others with kindness, patience, joy, and generosity. The CHRISTMAS Angels are you, when you sing to the world the message of peace, justice and love. The CHRISTMAS Star is you, when you lead someone to meet the LORD. You are also the wise men, when you give the best you have, no matter who they are. The CHRISTMAS Gift is you, when you are truly friend, sister, or brother of every human being. The CHRISTMAS card is you, when kindness is written in your hands. The CHRISTMAS greeting is you, when you forgive and reestablish peace, even when you suffer. So, may the CHRISTMAS Story live on, not only when we re-tell it every year; but in how we live our lives everyday.