

Dear Associates and Friends

A Belated Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year

A lot has been happening since the end of September's General Chapter. Bro. Dominic was going downhill noticeably. We all preferred that he would die here at home. Yet he required such skilled and constant care, besides medications, that it was a challenge to know when to bring him to our infirmary from the Nursing Home.

Bro. Boniface was there with him, so he was able to watch closely. The time came when Bro. Dominic would not, or could not eat, or drink, not even his favorite treats--so we knew the end was at hand with his terminal cancer.

The ambulance brought him home on a Friday evening. Jill, our health aide, simply camped in at Bro. Dominic's bedside night and day. Our community gathered in his room Saturday morning for the prayers of the dying and for his Sacrament of Anointing. We celebrated the Hours of the Divine Office in his infirmary room, complete with simple exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during meditation after Vespers. Brother died Monday evening, as Bro. Francis and Jill discussed The Mysteries of the Rosary. Bro. Francis was explaining his favorite part about being able to touch the face of God when Bro. Dominic died. He was touching the face of God.

He was ready for the Coming of Our Lord Jesus. After those nine months of final purification, he was birthed into eternal life. Rush season for fruit cakes started a bit slowly. Michael, our manager alternated between euphoria and despair, depending on the number of new orders each day. All is well that ends well--by the second week of December we were sold out. Bro. Francis put in long afternoons helping to get out each day's shipping.

Ron Lahav, our Israeli friend stayed with us as a long-term guest for the first two weeks of Advent. A few groups, some Catholic and some Non-Catholic, made Advent Retreats at our guest house.

Bro. Thomas suggested and Fr. Paul agreed that last year's Christmas tree in our refectory was really bigger than needed. So this year the tree is not quite so tall and not quite so rounded out. As usual his decorations are attractive and well done! (Though there is that big wood skeleton star with mini-lights up on the chapel's curved back panel.)

THEY DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIM

Often enough a mother has the experience that her first newborn baby is a Miracle Child. The mystery of new life growing within her, carrying for nine months the unseen developing infant inside her, which makes its presence known by a twist or turn or sudden kick, knowing that this child within has received its life as a gift and share from its mother's own life, and that her own blood is nourishing and being transformed into the body and blood of her unborn baby, and realizing that so much of this ongoing mystery is in the hands of God. All of this becomes an experience of a New Creation, when her child is born.

Mary would have experienced all this mystery, and even more, because she knew that her child had no human father. Somehow her newborn Son had received His human life as a gift and a share from God's divine life, united to a share of her own human life. Mary pondered all of these things in her heart, as she held her newborn baby in her arms.

God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son as a New Creation, as the New Adam. The prophet Isaiah rejoices tonight saying, "A child is born for us. A son is given to us. He will be called Wonder-Counselor, Divine Champion, Eternal Father, and Prince of Peace."

God finished all His work of Creation on the sixth day, but the serpent, the deceitful power of evil, attacked and brought destruction and death into God's world of goodness and peace. But ages later, on the night of the New Creation a heavenly choir of angels sings, "Glory to God in the highest. Peace to people of His good pleasure."

The first woman Eve was brought forth from the side of the first Adam. The New Adam was brought forth from the womb of the New Eve. God clothed the first man and woman in animal skins because they lost their original robe of adopted divine life. God clothed His Divine Son in human skin, because He came as the new Adam, giving new life to His human family, an adopted share in His own divine life.

Isaiah sings, "The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light." The angel tells the shepherds watching over their flocks at night, "Behold, I bring you news of great joy for all people. There is born for you this night in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord." Then the glory of God shone around them.

The New Adam came unto His own people, but they did not recognize Him. The angels told the

shepherds, "By this sign you will recognize Him. You will find the woman with her infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger."

St. Luke tells us that Joseph and Mary went up from Nazareth of Galilee to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (the House of Bread). While they were there, she gave birth to her firstborn Son, her Miracle Child. She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them at the Inn they did not recognize and receive Him.

To as many as recognized and received Him, the New Adam gave power to become Children of God. How do we recognize and receive Him? St. Paul tells us tonight, "Beloved, the gift of God has appeared, offering salvation to all and training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires--to live moderately, justly, and devoutly, as we await our blessed hope, the revelation of the full glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." That is how we keep spiritually alert to recognize and accept Him when He comes.

The first Adam gave himself up to the father of lies by eating the fruit which Eve gave him, against the commandment of Their Creator. St. Paul tells us that our great God and Savior, the New Adam, gave himself up for us to deliver us from all disobedience and to redeem for Himself a people as His own, who are eager to do what is good. On the sixth day of creation, God saw that all which He had made was good, very good. In His ongoing work of the New Creation, God, the Son makes for Himself a new people, who are eager to do well.

The day of Christ's birth at Bethlehem was only the first day of the New Creation. The New Adam worked 33 years in His sweat and blood, to bring forth the fruit of eternal life from the tree of death and life. Jesus says that the fruit, the Bread, which He gives is His flesh for the life of the world. A mother gives her own blood as food for the infant in her womb, so the New Adam gives His Body and Blood in the Eucharist to nourish and strengthen the adopted divine life within us. God the Creator made man and woman in His own image and likeness, but they were deformed by sin. The New Adam, born in Bethlehem, the House of Bread, reforms and transforms us always more back into His Image and Likeness by remaining with us as the Bread of angels, our Viaticum, Food for the journey. May we recognize and receive Him today in the breaking of the Bread, and in the least of His little ones who comes into our life today.

In Our Savior and His Mother,

Fr. Cyprian