

## Homily for Christmas Midnight, 2006

SING A NEW SONG.

REJOICE,

BE GLAD,

RESOUND,

EXULT...

ANNOUNCE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION,

FIDELITY AND TRUTH...

ALL OF THIS IS IN OUR RESPONSORIAL PSALM

WHICH WE SUNG MOMENTS AGO,

LED GRACIOUSLY BY BR LAZARUS AND JON.

SING A NEW SONG,

REJOICE,

BE GLAD.

THIS IS THE GOSPEL,

THIS IS THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS,

THE BIRTH OF THE SAVIOR,

THE ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN,

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

AS THE LETTER TO TITUS PUTS IT SO ATTRACTIVELY,

HE IS THE PHILANTHROPY OF GOD:

JESUS, SON OF MARY,

IS GOD'S BEST WAY OF BEING THE FRIEND OF MAN.

AS ST BERNARD SAYS SO TRULY AND WELL,

"I THINK THIS IS THE MAIN REASON WHY THE INVISIBLE GOD

WILLED TO BE SEEN IN THE FLESH...

HE WANTED TO RECAPTURE THE AFFECTIONS OF MEN

WHO WERE UNABLE TO LOVE IN ANY OTHER WAY,

BY FIRST DRAWING THEM TO THE SALUTARY LOVE OF HIS OWN HUMANITY,

AND THEN GRADUALLY RAISE THEM TO A SPIRITUAL LOVE."

IMAGINE THIS,

THAT NOWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD TONIGHT,

BUT ONLY WHERE CHRISTIANS ARE GATHERED,

IN LARGE CATHEDRALS AND TINY VILLAGE CHAPELS,

AND EVEN ON HUMVEE HOODS IN IRAQ'S DEBACLE AND HEAT

IS GOOD NEWS BEING PROCLAIMED,

AND ALL MEN AND WOMEN ARE BEING GIVEN A MOTIVE  
TO SING,  
TO REJOICE,  
TO BE GLAD.  
THIS IS CHRISTMAS,  
AND THIS IS THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE TO THE WORLD.  
THIS IS THE UNIQUENESS AND GIFT OF CHRISTIANITY TO OUR TIMES, AND TO ALL TIMES:  
"UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN, UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN."  
AS OUR SECOND READING SAYS,  
"THE GRACE OF GOD OUR SAVIOR HAS APPEARED TO ALL PEOPLE,"  
AND THE ANGEL TO THE SHEPHERDS IN THE GOSPEL,  
"GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY FOR ALL THE PEOPLE."  
SING A NEW SONG.  
REJOICE,  
BE GLAD,  
RESOUND,  
EXULT...

"UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN."  
LISTEN TO THE SPIN ST PAUL PUTS ON THAT,  
ON WHERE HE TAKES IT IN OUR SECOND READING:  
"UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN..."  
YES, SAYS PAUL,  
"OUR GREAT GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST  
IS THE SON GIVEN TO US  
WHO IN HIS TURN GAVE HIMSELF FOR US."  
AND TO WHAT END, TO WHAT PURPOSE  
HAS ONE OF THE DIVINE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY  
NOT ONLY BECOME FLESH, BUT GONE SO FAR  
AS TO GIVE HIMSELF FOR US?  
ONE WAY WE CAN ANSWER THAT IS TO SAY,  
"TO FREE US FROM OUR SINS."  
ANOTHER WAY, WHICH MEANS THE SAME THING,  
WAS SAID SO WELL BY DIONYSIUS:  
"THE DIVINE NATURE ACCEPTED A TRUE SHARE OF WHAT IT IS WE ARE,  
AND THEREBY ISSUED A CALL TO OUR LOWLY STATE TO RISE UPT TO IT ."  
AS ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM SAID,  
"WHEN YOU ARE TOLD THAT THE SON OF GOD

IS SON OF DAVID AND SON OF ABRAHAM,  
DON'T DOUBT THAT YOU, TOO, A CHILD OF ADAM, SHALL BE SON OF GOD.  
FOR NOT AT RANDOM, NOR IN VAIN, DID HE ABASE HIMSELF SO GREATLY;  
IT WAS HIS WHOLE INTENTION TO EXALT US.  
SO HE WAS BORN AFTER THE FLESH, THAT YOU MIGHT BE BORN AFTER THE SPIRIT; HE WAS  
BORN OF A WOMAN, THAT YOU MIGHT CEASE TO BE THE SON OF A WOMAN."  
HERE, THEN, IS A NEW MEANING  
TO THE OLD AND WONDROUS NEWS: "A CHILD IS BORN FOR US."  
THE CHILD IS JESUS.  
BUT THE CHILD IS ALSO YOU, A TRUE, A NEW,  
AN UNTRIED SELF: A CHILD.  
UNLESS YOU BECOME LIKE LITTLE CHILDREN;  
UNLESS YOU BE BORN AGAIN;  
WHAT WAS HIDDEN FROM THE WISE AND LEARNED,  
HAS BEEN REVEALED TO MERE CHILDREN.  
I HAVE COME, SAID JESUS,  
TO SEEK AND SAVE WHAT WAS LOST.  
THAT IS YOU, IT IS ME;  
IT IS THE TRUE SELF, THE NEW MAN,  
THE NEWBORN BABE LIVING ON THE MILK OF THE SPIRIT,  
DISCOVERED BY THE GRACE OF THE INCARNATION.  
A CHILD IS BORN FOR US,  
AND YOU ARE THAT CHILD, BECAUSE HE WAS.  
BELOW AND UNTOUCHED BY HURTS AND RESENTMENTS,  
ANGER AND DISAPPOINTMENT, COMPULSIONS AND SHORT-LIVED SATISFACTIONS  
IS THE CHILD WE ARE, ETERNALLY AT JOY,  
ETERNALLY IN LOVE. IT IS US.  
WE ARE NOT WHO WE THINK WE ARE,  
AND NEITHER IS THE BROTHER OR SISTER NEXT TO US,  
OR WHO SHARES OUR TABLE, OR OUR BED.

"THE PEOPLE WHO SAT IN DARKNESS  
HAVE SEEN A GREAT LIGHT."  
WE HAVE KNOWN DARKNESS,  
ONCE WE WERE DARKNESS, SAYS ST PAUL,  
BUT NOW, WE ARE LIGHT IN THE LORD.  
SING A NEW SONG.  
"A PEOPLE WHO WALKED IN DARKNESS

HAVE SEEN A GREAT LIGHT."  
ISAIAH CONCLUDES HIS HYMN  
WITH A GREAT CONFLAGRATION  
A FIRE BURNING UP ALL THE MILITARY UNIFORMS  
THAT EVER WERE.  
IT IS A FIRE BURNING OUR OLD SELF,  
THE SELF WHO HAS BEEN OUR TYRANNT FOR HOW LONG,  
OUR TASK MASTER, OUR CREDITOR, THE CAUSE OF OUR PAIN,  
AND OF OUR PAINING OTHERS.  
REJOICE,  
BE GLAD,  
RESOUND,  
EXULT...  
ANNOUNCE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION  
A CHILD, BORN TO US, US, US REBORN TO OURSELVES.

EVERY NOW AND THEN  
A LETTER ARRIVES AT THE ABBEY FROM PARIS, MO.  
IT IS ALWAYS WRITTEN IN PENCIL, ON LINED LOOSELEAF PAPER.  
USUALLY, THE WRITER SIGNS OFF,  
"THE INFANT OF PRAGUE."  
LAST WEEK'S CHRISTMAS LETTER WAS SIGNED,  
APPROPRIATELY,  
"THE CHRIST CHILD."  
A PASSAGE OR TWO FROM THIS LETTER  
ARE WORTH PONDERING ON.  
"WHY DO YOU SUPPOSE," THE CHRIST CHILD ASKS,  
"HEAVEN ONLY CHOOSES THE LITTLE CHILDREN  
TO DO THE WORK THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?  
YOU MUST BE A LITTLE CHILD WHEN YOU PRAY,  
THAT YOUR PRAYERS MAY BE HEARD IN HEAVEN."  
AND THEN THERE'S THIS"  
"I ENCOURAGE YOU TO TAKE IN THE POOR, FOR ONE OF THEM MAY BE ME COMING FOR A  
VISIT. THE WAY TO HEAVEN IS THROUGH THE POOR LITTLE CHILDREN...I AM SENDING YOU MY  
BLESSING, GRACE, AND VIRTUE, THAT YOU MAY HAVE A GENEROUS SUPPLY OF LIFE, HOLINESS,  
AND PEACE. NOW I AM POOR AGAIN, FOR THAT IS ALL I HAVE. MY WORD WILL NEVER PASS  
AWAY, FOR THAT IS MY GIFT TO YOU. CHERISH IT!!!"  
I WOULD ADD,

YOU ARE HIS GIFT TO YOU. CHERISH IT, BY GIVING IT AWAY, GIVING YOURSELF FOR CHRIST,  
FOR OTHERS.

December 25, 2006