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“the wonder of God with us, God within us”

## The Enduring Reality of Christmas

*The Rt. Rev. William S.H. Downey, Regional Bishop*

The Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord is near and we prepare to receive Him with joyous celebration, even in the midst of sorrow and mourning over the recent tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, or the political situations of Syria and/or Gaza, or other conditions either local or worldwide in scope. This is the time of year when we take a break from discouragement and sorrow and look toward the Source of Faith and Hope.

However, experience teaches us that just as the Holiday itself comes and passes so rapidly, so the joy and wonder of this time of year, too often, passes quickly out of our minds and hearts. The message and lessons of this season pass without leaving a trace upon our lives.

The Season enters our minds and consciousness on a number of levels: as a cosmic celebration marking the transition of the Sun and the rebirth of Light or as a cultural festival marking the seasonal revolution and the hope of rebirth in both Nature and humanity. Indeed, I have approached these aspects of the festival in past sermons and talks. But as a Christian, I think, the more meaningful message we are to take from this experience is the one imparted by the Angels to the shepherds.

The Second Chapter of St Luke:

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring **you** good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto **you** is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto **you**; **You** shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, **Let us now go** even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto **us**.

**And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.**

The message for us Christians is the mystery of the Incarnation revealed to us individually and personally. Matthew 1:23: Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

The God Child born within the manger of our hearts is a personal revelation and a personal experience. The Angels said to the Shepherds that they brought good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people but they used the personal pronoun you four times to emphasize that while the gift was for all people it was most importantly specific to them individually!

The message was to them individually and their response, likewise, was an individual one. The Scripture says they decided to go and see that which had been revealed to them and that they came with haste and found the babe.

And so the wonder of the miracle of Christmas, the wonder

of the Incarnation, the wonder of God with us, God within us is our

individual response to the invitation to the crib. Then the reality of Christmas has the opportunity to stay and endure after the day is past, after the tree is taken down, after the wrapping paper is burned in the fireplace.

The miracle of the Incarnation revealed to the shepherds changed their lives and that same change and transformation is available to us as well as a lasting legacy leading ever onward and upward.

The 1st century Christian apologist Tertullian says God penetrates the world “as honey does the honeycomb.” In the final analysis we might say that, the Word becomes flesh and dwells among us every time we allow this one eternal Light to shine through our lives — with every act of kindness and love, with every effort to follow the

Master, with every attempt to reach forward to a higher goal; in the Life of reconciliation and forgiveness, in the life of simplicity and search for Truth. This is the Life which becomes a demonstration of the Word made flesh. We become the honeycomb and His Spirit the Honey inside the comb — we become the opportunity to show the sweetness of God’s presence in the World.

May the joy and glory of Christmas be with you all now and throughout the coming year.

+*William*



“The Christ’s life is a mystical experience; a birth that continually occurs as the inherent powers of every human spiritual self unfolds.”

## The Liberal Catholic Church and the Christmas of the Soul

By Rt. Rev. Ruben Cabigting, Auxiliary Bishop, Province of the United States.

Based on: *The letters of C.W. Leadbeater to Annie Besant 1916-1923*

*The following letters are from Bp C.W. Leadbeater to Annie Besant relating to the development of the Liberal Catholic Church, from the Old Catholic movement and the preparation and revision of the Old Catholic Liturgy conforming to the Lord Christ’s wishes.*

Sydney, July 25, 1916

Wedgwood has arrived, and is in good health. His consecration to the Episcopate has had the unexpected result of putting him practically at the head of the Old Catholic movement as far as the British Empire is concerned, all his colleagues (except, I think, one) in it being Theosophists ready to work under his direction. This being so, he desires most earnestly to offer the movement to the World Teacher as one of the vehicles . . . I took him therefore to the Lord Maitraya (*the Lord Christ*) at the festival, and He was graciously pleased to accept the offer, and to say that He thought the movement would fill a niche in the scheme, and would be useful to Him. From what He said I inferred that He (*the Lord Christ*) Himself had so guided events as to produce this curious result, that a branch of the Catholic Church, having Apostolic Succession in a form which cannot be questioned, should be entirely in the hands of Theosophists, who are willing and eager to do exactly as He wishes. He explained that this was a method of bringing over the Holy Orders of the old plan into the new one . . . drawing round it those who love the Catholic ritual, but want a Theosophical interpretation of it and of the doctrine of the Church. With His permission, Wedgwood has consecrated me as a Bishop, on the understanding that . . . I am to act as intermediary between the Lord and this branch of His Church, referring to Him any points of action or of doctrine upon which it desires instruction.

The following letter is related to the decision of CWL to leave his Church in England in order to join the Theosophical Society in Adyar and become a pupil of Master K.H.

An interesting little glimpse of occult ways came to me the night after my consecration. My own Master (*Master K.H.*) referred very kindly to it, and spoke of the additional power to help that it had given me; and then He remarked: “You thought you had given up all prospect of a bishopric when you left your Church work thirty-two years ago to follow Upâsikâ (*H.P. Blavatsky*); but I may tell you that it would have been in this very year that you would have reached it if you had remained in your original work, so you have lost nothing except the





emoluments and the social position, and have gained enormously in other ways. No one ever loses by serving Us.” That struck me as curious, for I had never thought of it in that way.

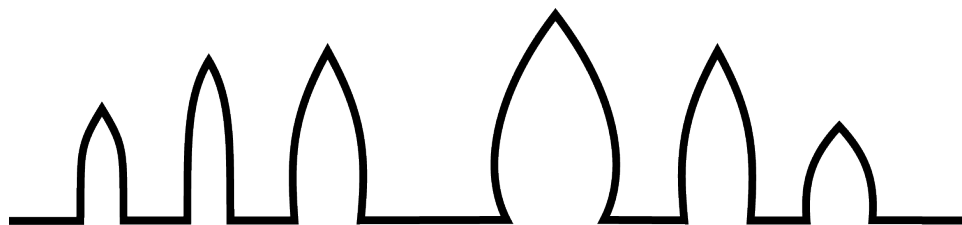
This letter describes the revision of the Catholic Liturgy of the Old Catholic Church by Bps C.W. Leadbeater and Wedgwood. In the process, Bp C.W.L. investigated clairvoyantly the efficacy of the wordings and actions in the Sacraments in the Liturgy including the participation of Angels of different orders and their actions in various stages of the Sacramental Ritual. They were both instructed by the Lord Maitreya during their astral visits to Him in Tibet on what he wanted done to the Liturgy.

*Sydney, December, 12<sup>th</sup>, 1916, five months after.*

The night before last we had the honor of submitting to the Lord Maitreya the revised Ritual of the Mass to be used by the Old Catholic Church at which we have been working for many months. Our instructions were to preserve the old thought-form and the working of the old magic—the effect of the various acts at different stages, the descent and return of the Angel of the Presence, etc.—but “to take all the brown and grey out of it and to substitute Gothic architecture from classical”. This we have done as well as we could, but apparently not even yet quite sufficiently. It seems that the Great Ones inspired the wandering bands of Freemasons (who built most of the great Cathedrals of Europe) with the idea of the Gothic type precisely as a physical plane attempt to guide them towards the kind of thought-form which it was wished that their religious services should erect; but they were singularly slow in seeing the analogy. They began in a slavish, well, say obsequious, and shrinking attitude, regarding God as a Being who had to be propitiated, begging Him to hear them for a moment before destroying them, to have mercy upon them, and generally acting as though He were an ill-conditioned tyrant instead of a loving Father. So their devotional thought made on the whole a flat-roofed sort of building—a dead level of nervousness and anxiety, with frequent depressions of slinking terror:



(I speak of course of the majority, not of the great Saints, and I am but repeating what He Himself said to us.) He wished us to substitute for this the splendid swift uprush of the Gothic, dotted constantly not with saucers of depression, but with spires and minarets of ecstatic love and devotion:



Well, we have done what we could, but to make these changes and yet keep the essential part of the old form was no easy task. The Lord was so gracious as to tell us that our result is a great improvement on anything that has been done before, and that it will do very well to go on with; but I think He regards it as an intermediate stage on the way to a Mass of Affirmation rather

than of prayer, in which we shall no longer ask God to do for us all sorts of things which we ought to be doing for ourselves—in which we shall not remind Him that He did this or that long ago to the children of Israel, but shall address all such explanations to our congregation, and turn to Him in uttermost love and adoration. But we must bring people along gradually, and this already departs widely from their preconceived ideas. He accepted it most graciously, altering only the expression “Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,” which we had left in because of its age, though we did not like it.

#### TALK BY C.W. LEADBEATER TO A GROUP

Sydney, December, 1916

We submitted our Mass and received some short comments on it. I will read what the Lord Maitreya said: “Wherever possible, it is eminently desirable that all public services should begin with a procession, which passes singing among the people. The Asperges should always be said or sung at every public Mass, and even at a private and solitary Mass the Priest should dip his finger or a sprinkler into holy water, and therewith sprinkle the Altar, cross himself once, and sprinkle thrice with his back to the Altar. Then he should recite the Collect which calls upon the Angel of the Mass. Incense should be used at all Masses, however small be the censer.”

“Please bear in mind at every point that, however desirable the edification of your congregation may be, it is *not* the primary object of the Mass. The drawing down of the force and the formation of a perfect instrument for its distribution must be the chief consideration. In older versions of the Liturgy this has been subordinated to the private preferences of individuals; it will be well if you can avoid that.”

“The Priest must *not* think of *himself* at all; he is either My representative to the people, or is leading the people in their approach to Me; in either capacity his efficiency will be impaired if he thinks of himself as a separate person. Therefore there must be only the one absolution, which he speaks in My Name at the beginning of the Service. Under no circumstances should he kiss the Altar, nor should there be kissing of hands or other objects; all that had its place in an earlier and different form of civilization, but is quite unsuitable now. The only ceremony approximating that which I wish you to retain is what is called The Kiss of Peace, though even for that I should prefer another name—The Salutation of Peace, or The Embrace of Peace.”

“There is no harm in throwing in Latin phrases where you are sure that every-one present understands and prefers them; but take care that they are not used where they might lead to a suspicion of your motive. Your ‘Dominus vobiscum’ is always addressed to the congregation, and should therefore always be spoken towards it. You do not offer blessings to the Apostolic Angels, but rather receive them from them.”

“The number of Collects is unimportant; they should not be unnecessarily multiplied in any of your Services, though it is well to make the usual commemorations. You have done well to adopt the traditional chant for the Sursum Corda, and also deciding to separate and simplify the words of consecration; as for the Bread you say, ‘This is My Body,’ so for the Wine you should say, ‘This is My Blood’; those are the actual Words of Power, whatever you may add afterwards. It is well to sing or recite the hymns after the consecration as I gave them to you, and not

substitute others. The Priest should refrain from touching the holy Altar with his hands. By all means make optional the use of the remarkable prayer (the Lord's Prayer) which your theologians unkindly insist upon attributing to Me, though in its present form I have certainly no wish to be considered responsible for it. I approved the omission of the Last Gospel, and the use of the First Ray Benediction after Mine."

Letter of CW Leadbeater to Annie Besant

*Sydney, March, 19<sup>th</sup>, 1918*

Last night the Lord Maitreya was gracious enough to receive some of us in regard to business connected with His Church. (*Astral visits by all concerned to the Lord Christ at His residence in Tibet.*)

*Sydney, April, 7<sup>th</sup>, 1920*

The Lord Himself stands behind all forms of Religion, and utilizes to the last ounce every thought of devotion and reverence which arises in connection with any of them; and He has been more than gracious and condescending in the help which He has given us with this His latest fledgling. He was so kind as to ask us to place the ritual in His hands, and in a very strange and beautiful way He made its aura or its higher counterpart a kind of coruscating cylinder of light which He then passed between His hands, thereby instantaneously detecting certain flaws in it which He at once pointed out and instructed us to rectify. The fact that He deigned to take this trouble showed us how keen was His interest in the work which He had given us to do. Also He told us to ask questions from the Master K.H. upon points as to which we were uncertain, and the information which we gained in this way was of the very greatest value to us. Much of it I have incorporated in *The Science of the Sacraments*.

I do not think that I never sent to you a copy of the message which the Lord Maitreya sent to Wedgwood when he first came out here as a Bishop. I enclose one now, for I know that everything which He says is always of interest.

Message from the Lord Maitreya to a Bishop.

"Not for a moment would I have you sanctimonious or hypocritical, proud or self-conscious; yet I would that your mission should be ever present in your mind. Be natural, yet let your nature be one with Mine, as Mine is with the Father. That is the possibility which I have given to my Bishops through the link which I have made with them; yet can this link be kept bright only through constant use. Close and perfect is the communication which I have opened; it is for them to keep it open, and for this, sleepless vigilance is needed. This gift I have given to them not for their enjoyment or advancement, but that through them My flock may be fed. They have been many to whom through the ages I have offered this dispensation, ... and I know that the burden which I have thus laid upon your shoulders is a heavy one. You know more of what it means than many have done, and to bear it as it should be borne will need all your strength; yet I say to you that you can achieve if you will. See to it that you fail not in your trust. As I said to those whom I chose twenty centuries ago, so I say to you now 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world'."

The current LCC liturgy is the final revision made by Bishops C.W. Leadbeater and Wedgwood after incorporating all of the Lord's wishes and making all the necessary corrections pointed out by Him and the suggestions made by Master K.H. The proposed ritual is designed to start with the Gospel Story in the form of Collects, Epistles and Gospels, the structure of which conforms with the Plan of God in the Spiritual Evolution of Humanity.

The clergy and some members of the congregation will spiritually be benefited if they use the Liturgy and the Church Calendar for meditation and diligently practice the lessons and intents given in the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel daily. Since Master K.H. assisted in the preparation of the LCC Liturgical Book, and is also the one who verbally instructed Alcyone on the four qualifications leading to the First Initiation of which Alcyone made the verbal instructions into a little book, **At the Feet of the Master**, it will be of great help to use it together with the Liturgy.

In addition, contemplating on the following statements will greatly facilitate the spiritual endeavor:

- Man, a Being in the Universe in whom highest Spirit and lowest Matter are joined together by Intelligence whose growth and splendor has no limit.
- Man is not meant to be compelled; he is to be free. He is not a slave, but a God in the making, and the growth cannot be forced, but must be willed from within.
- Each man is his own absolute law-giver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself; the Judge & Jury of his life, his reward, his punishment.

There is a stage in human evolution which immediately precedes the goal of all human effort. Those who pass through this stage have nothing more to accomplish as human beings. They have become perfect; their human career is over.

The great religions bestow different names on these Perfected Ones but whatever the name, the same idea is beneath it. Mithra, Osiris, Krishna, Buddha, Christ – all symbolize *one made perfect*. These great Ones do not belong to a single religion, single nation, or a single human family.

The name *Christ*, used for the Perfect One in Christianity, is the name of a *state* of consciousness rather than a name of a person.

Our destiny, in the long course of evolution and initiation, is to reach the Christ *state* sooner or later depending on our effort.

#### STAGES IN THE GOSPEL STORY as given in the LCC Liturgy

- PURIFICATION – The Nativity of our Lord or Christmas Day – First Initiation.
- ILLUMINATION – Baptism, Transfiguration, and Crucifixion – Second, Third, and Fourth Initiations.
- PERFECTION – Ascension – Fifth Initiation.

## THE CHRISTMAS OF THE SOUL – FIRST INITIATION

*A mystical and allegorical interpretation of the Gospel Story of the Nativity  
based on books by: Geoffrey Hodson, Annie Besant, C.W. Leadbeater, and H.P.B.*

The Gospel story of the Nativity is mystical as well as allegorical. The Christ's life is a mystical experience; a birth that continually occurs as the inherent powers of every human spiritual self unfolds. There are two main interpretations of the Gospel of the birth of Christ or Nativity in the Bible, i.e. the birth of the universe, and the birth of the spiritual consciousness in man.

**Matt. 1:18: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise. When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together was found with child of the Holy Ghost.”**

This describes the first and second verses of the Book of Genesis or cosmogenesis. Esoterically, the Holy Ghost (third aspect) and the Virgin Mary (space, waters, Maria, matter, mother) are personified creative potencies of God respectively, and the action is allegorically indicated in human procreation. The Spirit of God (Holy Ghost) moved upon the face of the waters (Virgin Mary) and the **Universe** (Christ, the Son) is born (virgin birth).

A similar and allegorical process happens in the personality and the spiritual Self of man. Joseph (lower or logical mind) who is the fiancé of Mary (higher mind or causal body) personifies the developed, disciplined, and intellectual mind of man which can only respond to intuition. Being logical and formal, he cannot participate in the birth of Christ (Intuition) which occurs only in the higher mind or causal body (Virgin Mary). Thus, esoterically, Christ is of virgin birth. Born of the Holy Ghost and Virgin Mary (virgin or root matter) as Immaculate Conception.

**Matt. 1:24-25: “Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife; And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.”**

The Nativity describes each and everyone's spiritual birth. Mystically, the first born, "new born," "twice born" or "born again" symbolize the first initiate. In the Gospel story, this birth of the higher consciousness or intuition, is called Jesus Christ. Likewise, in the Hindu scripture, *The Bhagavad Purana*, it is named Shri Krishna. The name Christ in esoteric Christianity, is the name of a state of consciousness, rather than the name of a person. Thus; "Christ in you, the hope of glory." "Till the Christ be formed in you." "Though Christ in Bethlehem be born and not within thyself, thy soul will be forlorn."

**Matt. 2:1-2: “Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem. Saying: Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”**

The three wise men from the East esoterically represent the three aspects of the spiritual or higher self, personified by the angel of Annunciation as **Spiritual will** or **Atma**, by **Christ** as **Wisdom** or **Intuition**, and **Mary** as **Spiritual Intelligence**. They are the counter part of the Holy **Trinity**, the **Father, Son, and Holy Ghost** in men.



**Matt. 2:9-11: “When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”**

The star symbolizes the One Initiator -the King of the World- Sanat Kumara - that shines during the initiatory ritual. The three wise men likewise, represent the three Masters appointed as hierophants to confer the first or second initiation to the candidate. The stable is the hall of initiation, and the inn, which is crowded, typifies the worldly life of men.

**Matt. 2:12-13: “And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the child and destroy him.”**

Herod personifies the pride and fear aspect of the personality of the initiate. The initiate’s spiritual development is enhanced as well as the powers of the lower mind, and the personality develops intellectual pride and the refusal to surrender to the Higher Self. The desire to retain control and continue the gratification of physical and sensual tendencies is stronger than ever. Thus Jesus metaphorically, fled to Egypt and Joseph, (the lower mind) intuitively saw both the danger and how to avoid it.

The following is an extract from the book *Practical Occultism* by H.P. Blavatsky, describing how an initiate successfully overcomes the personality:

“... To act and act wisely when the time for action comes, to wait and wait patiently when it is time for repose, put man in accord with the rising and falling tides (of affairs), so that with nature and law at his back, and truth and beneficence as his beacon light, he may accomplish wonders. Ignorance of this law results in periods of unreasoning enthusiasm on the one hand, and depression and even despair on the other. Man thus becomes the victim of the tides when he should be their Master. Have patience, Candidate, as one who fears no failure, courts no success.”

“Accumulated energy cannot be annihilated, it must be transferred to other forms, or be transformed into other modes of motion; it cannot remain forever inactive and yet continue to exist. It is useless to attempt to resist a passion which we cannot control. If its accumulating energy is not led into other channels, it will grow until it becomes stronger than will, and stronger than reason. To control it, you must lead it into another and higher channel. Thus a love for something vulgar may be changed by turning it into love for something high, and vice may be changed into virtue by changing its aim. Passion is blind, it goes where it is led, and reason is a safer guide for it than the instinct. Stored up anger (or earthly love) will find some object upon which to spend its fury, else it may produce an explosion destructive to its possessor; tranquility follows a storm. The ancients said that nature suffers no vacuum. We

cannot destroy or annihilate a passion. If it is driven away, another elemental influence will take its place. We should therefore not attempt to destroy the low without putting something in its place, but we should displace the low by the high; vice by virtue and superstition by knowledge...”

The above allegorically represents the flight to Egypt where Jesus dealt with his personality in safety until it was completely transcended and it was safe to return and continue his cause.

**Matt. 2:16: “Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked by the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men”**

Thus, Herod (pride) killed all the first born (first initiates) with the exception of Jesus who fled to Egypt.

Jesus Christ is present in all men and all men will experience the Christmas of the Soul at the appointed time dictated by his Monad his Father in heaven.

### PEACE TO ALL BEINGS



## PROVINCIAL NEWS

*Kathleen Clute and Parish Correspondents*

### Order of Our Lady Retreat

The New Mexico chapter of the Order of Our Lady held our first retreat November 3 & 4. Four members of the Order attended. Although we made the retreat open to any ladies in our New Mexico parishes, none chose to attend this year. As this was our maiden voyage, perhaps that was for the best!

Due to various issues, our first retreat lasted only 24 hours, beginning at 2 pm on Saturday, in the Bethany House at the Norbertine Community of New Mexico, in the South Valley of Albuquerque. Sunday morning we moved to Our Lady Queen of Angels, ending at 2 pm after our final discussion.

Mary Donovan and I had prepared a program for the retreat that emphasized liturgical readings and silent contemplation of the readings. We chose the readings from Trinity 17, Spiritual Progress. Mary put together a booklet that had all readings and all our other practices in one place, so that for the retreat we only needed to follow our booklet. All of us found this very helpful!

We opened the retreat with our usual meeting opening of the Angelus. For most of the retreat, we practiced a form of *Lectio Divina*, where one person read the selected text and then we all took time to contemplate it silently. There was a desert chapel near our retreat house — the Chapel of the Baptist — and some members retreated to the chapel for their silent times. The weather was still warm, so members also took some of their silent times outdoors, on benches that were conveniently located and provided sweeping vistas of the high desert.



*Retreat facilities at the Norbertine Community: Bethany House, left, and Chapel of the Baptist, right.*

We had short discussions after each period of silent contemplation, then proceeded to the next reading. There was extra time in the schedule before dinner, for those who had meditation programs. Our only real visiting times were over food! — an afternoon tea, dinner, and breakfast.

In the evening we also prayed Our Lady's Rosary of the Seven Rays, and before bed we prayed Complin.

Sunday began with Prime, followed by breakfast and clean-up, so that we could attend Our Lady Queen of Angels for Holy Eucharist. After the fellowship hour and luncheon there (staying silent during fellowship hour proved to be the most challenging part of our retreat, and I don't think any of us will say she succeeded at that), we prayed Sext and closed with a final discussion.

Although our retreat was short and there are still issues to work out, all participants agreed that it was a day well-spent. Silence grew in us and informed everything we did for some time after the retreat.

In the future we hope to have more participants, as well as figure out a way to stay on retreat but still have the celebration of the Holy Eucharist on Sunday morning. The Norbertine Community will be breaking ground on a



retreat facility this summer that could provide a chapel, as well as a larger communal dining space. The Chapel of the Baptist, while beautiful and silent, is unfortunately far too small for the celebration of the Eucharist. The Norbertines do have facilities to put up a few dozen retreatants, so once the new building is available we could continue with our ladies only retreats and also possibly host a western LCC retreat similar to the popular midwest retreats.

A silent retreat once a year is part of the Rule of Life we have adopted in our chapter, and we invite members of the Order from other chapters and indeed all ladies of our church to join us. Now that we've held our first, planning for the 2013 retreat will happen sooner in the year, so that we can invite you for specific dates well in advance.

*Kathleen Clute*

## Parish News

### The Church of St. Francis, Villa Park, Illinois

Greetings from the Church of St. Francis in Villa Park, Illinois. Our Holy Eucharist is every Sunday at 10:00 am. If you are ever in the area, please stop by and celebrate Eucharist with us. In addition to Sunday Eucharist, there is a Healing Service led by Fr. Daniel Provost on the first Wednesday of every month, and The Ray Rosary on select dates. We also have a pancake breakfast after Holy Eucharist on the 5th Sunday of the month. We offer books, small gifts, and hand assembled 7 Ray Rosaries for sale. Our newsletter is published 7 times per year, and is very informative. Please email us for more information. Check us out on Facebook, search "Church of St Francis".

On Sunday, October 7th, we had our annual Blessing of the Animals in honor of the Feast of St Francis. The event was held on the church lawn. Fr Daniel blessed 12 dogs in attendance and their owners. It was really special. We had a table set up with dog and cat treats, animal related prayer cards, and St Francis medals to give out.



Sunday, October 21st, was our Annual Congregational Meeting.

Fr Daniel oversaw the donation of winter wear items that member's of St Francis had donated to a local shelter. The collection of winter coats exceeded expectations. When the time came to donate the items, we had a whole table full of bags of coats, scarves, gloves, etc, which are a necessity during Chicago winters.

We were saddened by the sudden loss of John Ricci, on November 30th. John was a member and good friend of St Francis. He could always be counted on to help with maintenance needs in the church. John was a Chicago White Sox fan and a Chicago Bears fan. Please hold Julie, John's family, and friends in your thoughts and prayers.

Upcoming, we have Midnight Eucharist on Christmas Eve at 11:30 pm, followed



*John Ricci*

by Christmas Day Eucharist at 10:00 am. We are one of the few churches in the area that still has a midnight service, and it is favored by many. On Sunday, December 30th, we have our last pancake breakfast of the year. This is a good time to stuff yourself with pancakes and other breakfast goodies before starting those New Year's resolutions. While our pancake breakfasts are free of charge, we do appreciate a donation of a non-perishable food item (or two) which will then be donated to a local food pantry.

In January we will be continuing our Adult Education Video Courses in the "Lost Christianity" series. Also a second incense making workshop is in the final planning stages. This workshop will introduce the use of makko powder and sandalwood to the blend made previously, and the class will learn how to make incense cones and sticks.

Also, January 29th is the anniversary of our Rector, Fr. Terrence Metz's ordination, and January 31st is the anniversary of Fr. Daniel Provost's ordination. Congratulations Fr. Metz and Fr. Provost!

*Rabeca Collin*

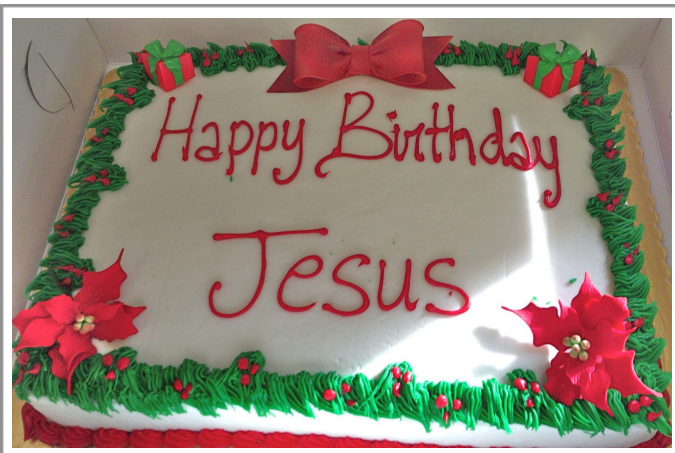
### **Our Lady Queen of Angels, Rio Rancho, New Mexico**

Sunday, December 16, the children of Our Lady Queen of Angels, with help from select adults, put on their first Christmas pageant. Santa Claus came to view their pageant, which he approved of, and then stayed to play Christmas carols on the accordion and dance with the children. It was observed by one of the children that Santa Claus' white beard is real! The festivities included a birthday cake for Baby Jesus.



*Above, the children of the parish perform their first Christmas pageant.*

*Below right, Fr. Timothy Donovan assists JJ in cutting birthday cake.*



How silently, how silently,  
 The wondrous gift is given!  
 So God imparts to human hearts  
 The blessings of His heaven.  
 No ear may hear His coming,  
 But in this world of sin,  
 Where meek souls will receive Him,  
 Still the dear Christ enters in.

~ Phillips Brooks, 1868 ~

### Illustration Credits

- Page 1* The altar of St Gabriel & All Angels, Fairfield, Iowa; Lucinda Hall.  
*Pages 2* *The Annunciation to the Shepherds & The Adoration of the Shepherds*, Abraham Hondius, 1663; the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.  
*Page 3* Bp Ruben Cabigting; picture supplied by Bp Ruben.  
*Page 4* Roof images supplied by Bp Ruben.  
*Page 10* *The Annunciation to the Shepherds*, William Blake, c. 1809; illustrations of Milton's ode *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, "Thomas set."  
*Page 11* [The Norbertine Community of New Mexico](#).  
*Page 12* Pictures supplied by Rebecca Collin.  
*Page 13* Pictures from OLQA [Facebook page](#).

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Rt. Rev. William Downey  
 Regionary Bishop  
[w.downey@sbcglobal.net](mailto:w.downey@sbcglobal.net)  
 1206 Ayers Ave.  
 Ojai, CA 93023

Kathleen Clute  
 Editor  
[herself@ackc.name](mailto:herself@ackc.name)

### Contributors

Rt. Rev. William S.H. Downey •  
 Regionary Bishop • Our Lady &  
 All Angels

Rt. Rev. Ruben Cabigting • Church  
 of St. Francis

Rabbecca Collin • Church of St.  
 Francis

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