

A Christmas Greeting to the Clergy and People of the See of Oswestry

Friends, the Church invites us this Christmas to ponder anew and to respond afresh to the mystery of our redemption in Christ. Robed in our human nature and sharing our life to the uttermost, God is born in our flesh, born of a most pure virgin, and all the angel hosts sing, 'Gloria in excelsis!'

The sweetness of the Virgin's lullaby and the harmony of the angelic choirs, stand in stark contrast to the cacophonies that characterize worldly affairs. We are - all of us - assailed by competing and ever more aggressive voices asserting the supremacy of this or that ideology, this or that social theory; the clamour that ascends continually. And these voices would drown out everything else if we but let them. The preoccupations of our time would totally absorb us and take us a great distance away from the Manger of the Incarnation. But God is saying, 'Come and see; I am here'. Our reply must be, 'Let us go even to Bethlehem'. Let nothing hold you back; let nothing of the world distract you, or draw you away; let nothing drown out God's royal summons to his rude cattle trough. Be singular in your hunger to find him; seek out the Manger-Throne of Christ, and in silent wonder gaze upon your salvation there. For the Catholic Faith is not an idea, a movement, or a philosophy, but an event – the incarnation – and a person, the Divine Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Across the See of Oswestry tonight and tomorrow morning, as we keep the Christmas Feast, each altar becomes a Bethlehem, each altar is a place where the incarnate Saviour deigns to dwell again in his very body and his very blood, to nourish you with his very presence to make you holy; for it is through the Eucharistic Miracle that the incarnate Lord makes himself present again, and again, and again – continually present – until he comes again.

May you be renewed in wonder at God's stooping down to us in Christ at the first Christmas, and may you be renewed in wonder that he stoops down still, that he continues his holy incarnation among his people, at the hands of his priests, through his Sacred Liturgy, in his Most Holy Sacrament. With the urgency of a shepherd and an angel's joy, hurry to meet him there.

A blessed Christmas to you all.

Fr Paul