

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) - December 25, 2011

Reading I: Isaiah 62: 1-5

Reading II: Acts 13:16-17, 22-25

Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

Dear Friends in Christ:

The infancy stories in Matthew and Luke pose challenges for those who would use them to reconstruct actual history, or see them as straightforward, literal recounts of historical events. The two narratives of Jesus birth agree on a number of points, but not on a number of the other "historical" details. These 'historical problems' should make it clear to us that the details of the Christmas narrative are symbolic and biblical; they communicate the mystery of redemption, not a diary of early events. This reflection on the very familiar Christmas story, which we proclaim once again this Christmastime, comes from a well respected Catholic commentary on the Bible. I quote it here as what I consider the most important point for us to keep in mind about our celebration of Christmas, as well as the point we most often misunderstand. Within the whole quote above, I think the most important phrase is: *they communicate the mystery of redemption*. This means that the truth or reality of the Christmas story is not just about something that happened "then and there", in Bethlehem some two thousand years ago. Rather, it is most importantly about what both **continues** and **waits** to happen in all our lives here and now. So, along with our joyful proclamation that Jesus **was** born in Bethlehem, we are also to ask: **will Christ continue to be born** in us today? Will **we** be Mary and Joseph, going out of our way to birth and nurture the Christ life in ourselves and others? Will **we** be the shepherds who went out of their way to meet the divine in unlikely places and experiences? Will we even **become** the Christ, in whom we have been baptized, and go out of our way to be with those who suffer, following Jesus all the way from Bethlehem to Calvary? In other words, will we share in **the mystery of redemption** the very familiar Christmas story communicates to us today?

Fr. Dan