

AMPLEFORTH ABBEY

In those days a decree went out ...that all the world should be registered. .. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. In that region there were shepherds ... keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people...'

MASS TIMES IN THE ABBEY CHURCH

Sun.	25 December	NATIVITY OF THE LORD	10:00
Mon.	26 December	Feast: St. Stephen	10:00
Tues.	27 December	Feast: St. John the Evangelist	10:00
Weds	28 December	Feast: The Holy Innocents	10:00
Thurs	29 December	Feast: St. Thomas Becket	10:00
Fri.	30 December	Octave	10:00
Sat	31 December	Octave	10:00

A TIME FOR HEALING



As we listen to the familiar accounts of the Nativity from *Matthew* and *Luke*, we again marvel at the unflinching power of the drama of the Incarnation to stir our minds and hearts. This, however, is not – and should not be – cosy sentimentality. In passing beyond any idealized version of Christ's first coming – and recalling the deadly peril of an apparently dubious birth which threatened disgrace and worse for Mary, and ruined hopes for Joseph her husband – we can enter more deeply into what it means for God to enter into the messy reality of human life. Even today, 'honour killings' – often by close family members against one who is seen to have behaved shamefully – are a reality. Far from abandoning mankind to its stubborn refusal to learn from past mistakes, God chose the path of 'divine folly' in entrusting his Son to a turbulent and disordered world – knowing that only the gift of Immanuel (God-with-us) could start that secret, hidden, healing which it – and we – needed, and still need.

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TABLE-TALK FOR CHRISTMAS



Like many things, liturgical precision certainly has its proper place. However, there are times when 'blurring' the distinction between Advent and Christmas is not just *allowable*, but actually a good idea. One such is the now customary end-of-year celebratory gathering of staff and monks in the Abbot's Meeting Room to mark the final days before the Christmas break. Hosted by Liam Kelly and Julia Brooke of the Abbot's office, the interlude offers an invaluable opportunity to welcome new staff who have not yet had an opportunity to meet many members of the monastic community. This year's mild weather – compared to the dramatic freeze in 2010 – meant that there were fewer anxious glances outside, and nervous estimates about the chances of getting home in a reasonable hour...

CHERCHEZ LA FEMME – A REALITY CHECK FOR THE NATIVITY



Just before Christmas, the Monastery had a showing of *The Nativity* – the award-winning interpretation of the drama of the Incarnation. Its portrayal of the Annunciation and the shocked local response to Mary's unforeseeable pregnancy was rooted in *Matthew* and *Luke's* narratives – but drew from these some enlightening and thought-provoking perspectives on the gritty contemporary repercussions for a vulnerable teenage bride. As one reviewer expressed it: "*using a powerful creative imagination [while]...faithful to the structure, theology and essence of the texts [to make] the miracle of the Incarnation seem far more wonderful and...miraculous.*" Not a bad outcome as we encounter the ever-new Mystery of God made Man.

WEEKDAY MONASTIC OFFICE IN THE ABBEY CHURCH

6.00 a.m. Matins

7.30 a.m. Lauds

8.45 a.m. Little Hour

6.00 p.m. Vespers

8:15 p.m. Compline