Bearing the Bethlehem Light

Christmas invites us to stand again before the mystery of light—-fragile ,persistent and captivating. The heart of the Bethlehem light is simple: God's presence arriving quietly, humbly, and in ways the world often overlooks. John's Gospel says, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of the human race. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." These Gospel verses from John are not just a proclamation about Christ; they are a quiet commission for contemplatives who live their vocation in a world that often feels like night. Contemplatives witness this through silence, prayer, and a life ordered toward interior stillness. But lay people—those living in the swirl of work, family, and daily responsibilities—can carry that same light with a radiance uniquely their own.

The Bethlehem light is not reserved for monasteries or cloisters. It is entrusted to anyone willing to let Christ be born in the ordinary. Lay people become bearers of this light when they allow their daily lives to become places of encounter: a kitchen table becomes a stable, a commute becomes a pilgrimage, a moment of patience becomes a small annunciation. The contemplative's silence is mirrored in the lay person's attentiveness—those brief pauses where they choose kindness over irritation, presence over distraction, hope over cynicism.

What contemplatives express through solitude, lay people express through relationship. Their witness is incarnational: faith lived in the middle of grocery lines, office meetings, caregiving, and neighborhood conversations. In these places, the Bethlehem light shines not because life is peaceful, but because God enters precisely where life is messy.

To carry the Bethlehem light is to make space for God's nearness. Contemplatives do this by withdrawing; lay people do it by engaging. Both paths reveal the same truth: Christ comes to those who make room. The world needs both forms of witness. But the lay vocation has a particular power today. It shows that holiness is not an escape from ordinary life but a transformation of it. When lay people live with a contemplative heart—quiet inside even when life is loud—they become lanterns of Bethlehem in places contemplatives may never reach physically.

Mary is honored as the first bearer of Christ the Light, the one who carried the hope of the world within her before anyone else recognized what was coming. In the Christian tradition, her "yes" to God becomes the moment when divine light first enters human history in a tangible way. At Christmas, when Christ is born, that hidden light she carried is revealed to all people—yet Mary remains the one who first welcomed it, protected it, and offered it to the world. Her role is both humble and cosmic: the mother who cradles a child, and the faithful servant who ushers in salvation.

The Quiet" Yes"

They walked away from roads once known,
From dreams that might have been their own;
With open hands and willing hearts,
They chose a life set far apart.
No wedding bells , no treasures stored
But richer gifts in serving the Lord.
They traded comfort, praise and ease
To kneel in prayer for souls like these.
In silent chapels, candles glow;
Their whispered prayers rise soft and slow.
For those who suffer, grieve and roam,
They ask that every heart find Home.
They bind the wounds no eye can see,
They teach the young what hope can be.
They hold the frail with gentle grace,
And see God's image in each face.
Their wealth is found in love bestowed,
In every burden shared and shouldered load.
Their joy is born not out of fame,
But faithfulness without a name.
The world may never know their tears,
Their hidden sacrifices through the years;
Yet heaven counts each quiet deed.
Each whispered prayer for every need.
So blessed are these Sisters true,
Whose lives proclaim God's love anew.
In humble service, day by day,
They light the world along its way.
And though their names may fade from sight,
Their witness shines with steadfast light.
For every soul they've knelt to bless.
Bears witness to their quiet "yes".

By: ERIC M.

*This poem was sent to us by **Eric M.**, our convent friend and benefactor to "honor past, present and future women who decide to hear God's voice and enter monastery life."*

Mount Grace

Newsletter
December 2026

The light shines on in darkness, a darkness that did not overcome it.

John 1:5

The true light which gives light to the human race was coming into the world. John: 1:9



Archbishop Mitchell Rozanski joined our community for a light snack and short updates after the Sacred Heart novena of Masses. In June.



Sr. Americas, SSVM who is currently assigned in war-torn Syria dropped by to share about the very challenging apostolate of the Sister Servants of the Virgin of Matara in the Middle East.



Sister Celestina Tangan, SSpS came all the way from the Philippines to give us a 19-day Workshop on Aging Gracefully and Gratefully.









Fr. Michael Monshau, OP and Sister Marie Mechtild Wasserthal, RSM, Vicar for Religious in our Archdiocese facilitated a day of recollection for Cloistered Nuns in our Marian Hall.



(Left:) The Rosary Team: Four Sisters teamed up to produce 1,000 mission rosaries for distribution at the beatification of Venerable Fulton Sheen. (Above:) Our community had the singular blessing of receiving Luis Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle's visit on September 23, 2026, the day before he presided at the beatification of Blessed Fulton Sheen in our city. He said Mass in our fully –packed chapel and joined us for lunch together with his secretary, Msgr. Thomas Schluep, Fr. Chase Hilgenbrinck, Vocation Director for the Peoria Diocese, Fr. Adam MacDonald, SVD, Vocation Director of the SVD Chicago province and Fr. John Paul Hopping, our chaplain.

Left) Newly ordained Fr. Michael Laugeman offered his first Mass with our community and gave us his priestly blessing on the feast of our Patron, St. Louis IX .



Dear Family, Friends, and Benefactors,

As we rejoice in the quiet radiance of Christmas, we give thanks for the Lord's nearness and for the many ways His providence has been shown through your kindness. Your support strengthens our life of prayer and allows us to remain faithfully at our place before the Eucharistic Lord.

This holy season invites us to ponder the mystery proclaimed in John 1: *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."* In a world often shadowed by uncertainty, the Light of Christ continues to shine—steady, gentle, and victorious. In our cloister, we seek to keep that light burning through adoration and intercession, and your generosity makes this quiet mission possible.

Please know that you are lovingly remembered in our Advent and Christmas Devotions and Masses . May the Child of Bethlehem bless you with peace, hope, and the enduring light of His presence throughout the coming year.

In the love of the Divine Child,

Sister Louise Mary and Sisters

Chaplain's Corner



Rev. John-Paul Hopping

On the fourth week of September, we joyfully celebrated the Beatification of Archbishop Sheen. Many wonderful visitors came to St. Louis and Mount Grace for this holy event, including people from Peoria, Illinois, Cardinal Tagle of the Vatican, and Bishop Efren Esmilla of Philadelphia; both prelates are originally from the Philippines. We also met a family considering the Pink Sisters as a religious vocation for their daughter.

What draws people to Mount Grace and the Pink Sisters? The things of God: Truth, Beauty and Goodness. Even without advertising, the visitors recognize the Sisters' genuine love for God, the Church, and all who come. Their singing makes Mass beautiful, while the Sisters' floral arrangements, the Italian marble sanctuary, and the historic 1927 oak construction delight the eye. Visit Mount Grace in April, May or June to see lilies blooming in front of the chapel beside the statue of St. Joseph and the Child Jesus.

And what of Goodness —- or perhaps holiness? Visitors sense it in the chapel reverent silence, where a Pink Sister is always praying and adoring before our Eucharistic Lord exposed in the monstrance. They treat one another and Mount Grace with respect. Much of this Goodness is unseen here, people encounter God in the monstrance and in prayer. Many find consolation as they pour out their troubles to Jesus, ever present and responsive to each person. Even heartache becomes easier to bear when we trust that Jesus cares for us and guides us through our trials. Miracles happen too.

As Christmas draws near, we marvel at the depth of God's love: He sent His Son, Jesus, to enter our world and share its hardships. Could the Heavenly Father truly have done this for us? Come and see! As always,