



# CHRISTMAS

## DAY MASS

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Jean PATEAU  
Abbot of Our Lady of Fontgombault  
(Fontgombault, December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025)

*Hodie.*  
Today.  
(Antiphon for Magnificat, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vespers)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
My dearly beloved Sons,

**T**HE *HODIE* OF GOD, the “Today” of God, is not the *hodie* of man. We know quite well man’s *hodie*, for we live it. It is inexorably welded both to the past and the future.

The past is the storage room of the moments, good or evil, that punctuated all the *today*s which no longer exist. In the present instant, these moments have a name: they are called remembrances, in French, *souvenir*, which etymologically means elements “coming from underneath.” They are also elements that come unexpectedly into our thoughts, in French, *survenir*, etymologically “coming from above.” The past can help us to live, to enrich the present moment by drawing from the experience it allowed us to acquire and store. However, too often it leads us into dreams, happy or unhappy fumes that obsess and darken our consciences.

As to the future, its case is hardly better. It stirs so many worries! We are then tempted by dreams, those of a fabulous future.

The past or the future too often occupy the *hodie* of our lives. Basically, they lead us to flee from this *hodie*, to flee

from the present moment, which, as shown by its name, is a present, a gift from God.

On this Christmas day, when so many gifts are exchanged, we ought to remember that the fairest of all gifts God gives us is the present moment, the *hodie* which opens man's heart to an encounter with God. Yet, a gift is fully a gift only insofar as it is received.

That is what the shepherds lived. They went to the crib. They saw the Divine Child. They heard the angels singing:

Today, Christ is born; today, the Saviour has appeared; today on earth, the angels are singing, the archangels are rejoicing; today, the righteous are filled with gladness, and proclaim: "Glory to God in the highest, alleluia."<sup>a</sup>

a. Antiphon of Magnificat,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vespers.

This event, which took place in Bethlehem more than 2,000 years ago, is not a mere remembrance. It remains valid today. To this end, it takes its roots in another *hodie*, not that of man, but of God.

We were led there by the introit of the Midnight Mass:

The Lord has said to Me: Thou art my Son, today I have begotten Thee.<sup>b</sup>

b. Ps 2:7.

And also by the first words of the Prologue of the Gospel of St. John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.<sup>c</sup>

c. Jn 1:1-2.

This *Hodie* of God remains a mystery, hard to grasp. We try to see it in a very human way, as a succession of identical moments that add to each other, lasting and making up what we call eternity. Nothing of the sort. God doesn't last. He is, purely and simply.

When each Sunday we recite the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, we confess:

I believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.

I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from

Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father...

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son, He is worshipped and glorified...

God is Trinity. The Father begets the Son. The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Three are One God, Who receives a same worship and a same glory. The Trinity is a blazing source of relationships, where the Three Persons subsist in the perfection of an act of being of such a simplicity and perfection that it needs not extend into duration. HE IS.

As the crib, the liturgy is the place where God's *Hodie* and man's *hodie* meet. How so?

With the birth of the Child Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem, God's *Hodie* comes and meets man's *hodie*. The Bible bears witness to God's quest for man. Its aim? Not to reveal man to God. No, God seeks man to reveal Himself to him. How may such an encounter take place, if not that man's *hodie* should be sucked up into God's *Hodie*?

Such is the true mystery of Christmas. The Child of the crib, Whose birth we recall today, takes flesh so as to lead us to be born again to God. This new birth will be made possible by the Paschal mystery.

But this new birth won't take place if we don't take part in it. It behoves us to set all things in such a way that the *hodie* we are living should take part in God's *Hodie*, that it should become, with all due richness and weight, a true present.

What shall we do, except make acts of faith and charity, which give us to take part, as far as is possible, to what is lived in the bosom of Trinity?

As the shepherds, as the Wise Men, as we sung it yesterday night at the beginning of Christmas Matins, let us ceaselessly adore God, borne as we are by the holy light which radiates from the crib to enlighten and warm up our hearts. As Mary, let us ponder the holy mysteries.

As the shepherds, as the Wise Men, let us bear to the world the mystery that sets our hearts ablaze. Let us offer to our neighbour, to all of those who, without truly knowing what

they desire, are expecting God, let us offer to them the peace that comes from God. Let us carry out works that bear witness to a charity and hope drawn from communion with God, and stem from seeing the world with new eyes, an extension of the Divine Child's eyes.

Then Christ will be truly born to us. Then He will truly be our Saviour. Then our humble *hodie*, as a new stable, will become present. May Mary, happy Mother of God and men, intercede that it should be so.

Have a holy and merry Christmas. Amen, Alleluia.

