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## *Padre Pio's Christmas Meditation*

Appearing in volume four of the Italian-language edition of Padre Pio's letters, this essay was taken from Padre Pio's hand-written notebooks. To the best of my knowledge, it is presented here for the first time in English.

*Translated by Frank M. Rega, December 2005.*

"Padre Pio da Pietrelcina: Epistolario IV," Edizioni Padre Pio, San Giovanni Rotondo, 2002, pages 1007-1009.

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**Far into the night, at the coldest time of the year, in a chilly grotto, more suitable for a flock of beasts than for humans, the promised Messiah – Jesus – the savior of mankind, comes into the world in the fullness of time.**

**There are none who clamor around him: only an ox and an ass lending their warmth to the newborn infant; with a humble woman, and a poor and tired man, in adoration beside him.**

**Nothing can be heard except the sobs and whimpers of the infant God. And by means of his crying and weeping he offers to the Divine justice the first ransom for our redemption.**

**He had been expected for forty centuries; with longing sighs the ancient Fathers had implored his arrival. The sacred scriptures clearly prophesy the time and the place of his birth, and yet the world is silent and no one seems aware of the great event. Only some shepherds, who had been busy watching over their sheep in the meadows, come to visit him. Heavenly visitors had alerted them to the wondrous event, inviting them to approach his cave.**

**So plentiful, O Christians, are the lessons that shine forth from the grotto of Bethlehem! Oh how our hearts should be on fire with love for the one who with such tenderness was made flesh for our sakes! Oh how we should burn with desire to lead the whole world to this lowly cave, refuge of the King of kings, greater than any worldly palace, because it is the throne and dwelling place of God! Let us ask this Divine child to clothe us with humility, because only by means of this virtue can we taste the fullness of this mystery of Divine tenderness.**

**Glittering were the palaces of the proud Hebrews. Yet, the light of the world did not appear in one of them. Ostentatious with worldly grandeur, swimming in gold and in delights, were the**

great ones of the Hebrew nation; filled with vain knowledge and pride were the priests of the sanctuary. In opposition to the true meaning of Divine revelation, they awaited an officious savior, who would come into the world with human renown and power.

But God, always ready to confound the wisdom of the world, shatters their plans. Contrary to the expectations of those lacking in Divine wisdom, he appears among us in the greatest abjection, renouncing even birth in St. Joseph's humble home, denying himself a modest abode among relatives and friends in a city of Palestine. Refused lodging among men, he seeks refuge and comfort among mere animals, choosing their habitation as the place of his birth, allowing their breath to give warmth to his tender body. He permits simple and rustic shepherds to be the first to pay their respects to him, after he himself informed them, by means of his angels, of the wonderful mystery.

Oh wisdom and power of God, we are constrained to exclaim – enraptured along with your Apostle – how incomprehensible are your judgments and unsearchable your ways! Poverty, humility, abjection, contempt, all surround the Word made flesh. But we, out of the darkness that envelops the incarnate Word, understand one thing, hear one voice, perceive one sublime truth: you have done everything out of love, you invite us to nothing else but love, speak of nothing except love, give us naught except proofs of love.

The heavenly babe suffers and cries in the crib so that for us suffering would be sweet, meritorious and accepted. He deprives himself of everything, in order that we may learn from him the renunciation of worldly goods and comforts. He is satisfied with humble and poor adorers, to encourage us to love poverty, and to prefer the company of the little and simple rather than the great ones of the world.

This celestial child, all meekness and sweetness, wishes to impress in our hearts by his example these sublime virtues, so that from a world that is torn and devastated an era of peace and love may spring forth. Even from the moment of his birth he reveals to us our mission, which is to scorn that which the world loves and seeks.

Oh let us prostrate ourselves before the manger, and along with the great St. Jerome, who was enflamed with the love of the infant Jesus, let us offer him all our hearts without reserve. Let us promise to follow the precepts which come to us from the grotto of Bethlehem, which teach us that everything here below is vanity of vanities, nothing but vanity.

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**COMMENTS WELCOME**

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