

FR. CAMURATI'S CORNER

January 9, 2022

15 years ago, I was at midnight Mass in my home parish. The Mass was nice enough, but I found the homily rather frustrating. The preacher went on for 15 minutes (at 12:40 in the morning mind you) about what a *joyous* day this was. His focus: the *joy* of Christmas brings *joy* to our world, and so we should be *joyous*. I shouldn't be too hard on him, as all of this is true. But it reminds me of a story:

A test pilot loses control of his plane, and bales out. He's safe, however he and his parachute get snagged in a tree! While waiting up there for help, a man walks by and notes "You're stuck in an oak tree!"

The test pilot immediately realized his situation. "You must be a Dominican!" he said.

"Why yes, I am a friar preacher. How did you know?"

"Because what you said is true, but not helpful!"

Perhaps you've been tempted to provide the same punchline—or have—to some of the friars who serve here (or who write this corner). Fair enough. But in this particular case, this *non-Dominican* seemed to just go around in circles. "Why should we be joyous?" "Because Christmas is a joyful time!" "What if I don't feel joyful?" "Well...um...do better!"

At the end of that midnight Mass, at 1:15 in the morning, the pastor had some parting words. An Auxiliary Bishop in Brooklyn, and reputed for his eloquence. He did not disappoint. "Saint Athanasius taught that when God descended to Earth, He raised all of creation into His Divine Life. Let us pray..."

The abbey is supported spiritually in prayer by about one hundred Oblates and over eight hundred Friends. Oblates are similar to Third-Order Franciscans or Dominicans. Stanbrook is celebrated for its traditions of Gregorian chant, devotional literature and fine printing including the translations of the writings of St. Teresa of Avila which are still in print a century after their publication. The abbey started printing operation in 1876 and acquired an international reputation for fine printing. Although digital printing and publishing continues at the Abbey on a small scale, the fine letterpress printing which made the Press famous ceased in 1990.

Merry Christmas!

Fr. Leo, O.P.