

## Christmas Day 2007

*John 1:1-18*

What a wondrous gospel.

After various accounts of the birth of Christ

(Matthew for Vigil Mass, Luke for Midnight and Dawn Mass)

we are given a contemplative gaze, an “aerial” view (so to speak),  
a seemingly less accessible perspective.

This passage, the prologue of John’s gospel, goes to the heart of the Christmas matter.

The accounts of the birth of Christ are the “historical how” of what we read here.

The birth of the Christ is

- how the Word became flesh
- how the Word came into our world, in and through a womb

Bethlehem and all of its details are important, because in love details are important.

But, at Christmas, we celebrate *the Word made flesh*.

We are not simply recalling Bethlehem of 2000+ years ago.

The *event* of the birth of Christ, as wondrous and beautiful as it was, *was*.

The mystery of the Word made flesh *is*

- is in our midst
- is the secret of our soul.

Although wondrous, this gospel passage may leave some of us wondering: “huh?”

It is indeed lofty and seemingly inaccessible.

It is lofty, for the mystery of God is too deep for human concepts and words.

But lofty does not mean distant and irrelevant.

Whether we know it or not, each of us has been taken hold of by

- this mystery
- the God-man

Let us dare briefly dissect (i.e. highlight a few things from) the passage

...for the sake of wonder.

**v. 1** “In the beginning” does not mean “before the world was created”.

= In the *principle*, the *source*, i.e. the bosom of the Father

was the *Second* Person of the Trinity: the Father’s Secret.

He is God and one with the Father.

**v. 3** He, therefore, created all things. Creation is a Trinitarian act.

**v. 4** He communicates life.

**v. 5** He communicates light, a light that darkness cannot stop.

**v. 9** Because He is light, He establishes a very secret covenant  
with every human intellect, made for light.

**v. 12** Those who receive him are *born again*. Christmas is also about our *re-birth*.

The gift of grace

- joins us to God in a new way
- makes of us children of God
- transfigures us deep inside

Grace is precisely a *gift*. As this passage suggests, it is not something

- transmitted by humans
- merited by humans
- invented by humans

It is a gift.

St. Leo the Great once preached on a Christmas morning in the early 400's:

“O Christian, be aware of your nobility: it is God's own nature that you share.”

**v. 14** He makes his dwelling among us, or rather, *within* us.

The original Greek speaks in terms that suggest “pitching his tent”.

God become human, i.e. *Jesus*,

- pitches his tent in us.
- makes his home in us.

How amazing! We are truly fragile vessels indwelt by almighty God.

God delights in us.

Why would He want to waste time with us distracted, often self-absorbed beings,  
especially if He is complete unto Himself?

The only real answer: Because He is love, and love always communicates itself.

**v. 16** He comes to us completely and lavishly, “excessively”.

We celebrate the Word made flesh, and therefore God taking hold of us  
– even in *our frail flesh*.

We celebrate intimacy and closeness that we cannot begin to fathom.

God is closer to us than we are to ourselves.

Put that on your fridge for the New Year!

*God is closer to us than we are to ourselves.*

Brothers and Sisters, God's very own happiness is there for the taking.  
Of course, it is lived in faith, i.e. without seeing, most often without feeling.  
It is deeper than feeling.

And, as the same St. Leo the Great said that same Christmas morning:

"Nobody is an outsider to this happiness."

All we must do is say "yes", receive.

It is that simple. Too good to be true, huh?

**No!**

Receive the gift, and then seek to live by the gift.

How do we do that?

The best Christmas and New Year resolution is to *pray*,  
to spend more quiet time with the Word made flesh, with Jesus.

It is in the secrecy of the heart, opened in prayer,  
that we encounter Him and are transformed into his lovers.