



Thursday 25th December 2025

Christmas Day

Gospel Reading

John 1.1-14

The Word Became Flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Other Readings: Isaiah 52.7-10

Psalm 98

Hebrews 1.1-4[5-12]

Homily

Have you ever looked through an open door into a busy room and thought 'I don't think I fit in here, there's no space for me!' You can see people who are busy, who seem to know each other, who are talking and enjoying each other's company. You'd like to join in, but you feel that to do so might be to impose and to intrude. Would you be made welcome? Even if you haven't had this experience, perhaps you can understand what it might be like. Human beings are made for companionship, and yet so much in the world can inhibit our fellowship and friendship.

On the night of Jesus' birth, we are told by St Luke that there was no room at the inn - the holy family didn't even get beyond the threshold. However, in the makeshift stable outside, it was they who gradually gathered a new people together: shepherds and sheep, animals and angels, and in time wise men or kings all join the party. The whole created order is present: those from this world and those from worlds beyond, human beings and animals.

Jesus causes everyone to be made welcome. A baby, who is God's son, remakes the world from the bottom up.

St Luke tells this very physical story of a birth that changes everything for the better, filling it with detail that we have subsequently turned into crib scenes and Christmas cards, extraordinary art and sometimes prosaic pictures: straw and animal smell and lavish gifts of perfume and ointment. St John describes things from a different perspective. He tells of the journey of the Word, of God himself, not of the first witnesses to the scene or even of Mary and Joseph on the road to Bethlehem as they obeyed the orders of the Roman emperor. Rather, St John looks at the earth with the eyes of heaven, of the Creator regarding his creatures, of the source of all things deciding to intervene in the world because of his overwhelming love: 'And the Word became flesh and lived among us ... full of grace and truth.'

What a thing of wonder! Did the Lord of all, as he looked at his world and decided to enter it by taking human flesh and being born of a woman in our midst, consider that this was a step that he would rather not take? Was he like those of us who hover on the threshold, weighing up whether or not he was going to enter the room? Or was he firm and decisive in his action, even if he was ultimately vulnerable in that he was born as a child who was utterly reliant on those around him for food and warmth and protection?

Jesus' subsequent life and ministry suggest that there was no indecision on the threshold of this world. Yes, there was probably awareness as to what taking human flesh would ultimately mean for him - the nails and sword of the cross were already waiting. But in his selfless, transforming love, Jesus' path was set from the moment that he began his journey of incarnation - and as we know from the crib scenes he started to renew creation even when he was a new-born in the manger. Human beings, his own people, 'did not accept him' - or at least not all of them. But as the true light, coming into the world that had its very being because of him, Jesus committed himself from the beginning to the work of redemption that would climax in the garden of the resurrection. For those who did and do accept him, as St John says, 'he gave power to become children of God', with the responsibility to share the good news of his love. And to all people, whatever their views about him, he remains 'the life and ... the light of all people.'

As we celebrate Jesus' birth this Christmas of 2025, may we each in our own way seek to welcome him into our hearts. May we accept the love, grace, forgiveness and dignity that he offers as he refuses to 'stand outside'. And may we commit ourselves anew to pointing to his light in the world, holding that light as a beacon and comfort to others and sharing that light as the thing that gives us hope and peace and joy. Amen.

Conversation Questions

1. What surprises you about the Christmas story as you hear it this year?

2. Is there anything that brings you hope and joy as you listen to today's Scripture readings?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

*Almighty God,
you have given us your only-begotten Son
to take our nature upon him
and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin:
grant that we, who have been born again
and made your children by adoption and grace,
may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

(or)

*Lord Jesus Christ,
your birth at Bethlehem
draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth:
accept our heartfelt praise
as we worship you,
our Saviour and our eternal God.*

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