



**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

***The Second Sunday of Christmas***

**Gospel Reading**

**John 1:[1-9]10-18**

**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. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

**Other Readings: Jeremiah 31.7-14    Psalm 147.13-21    Ephesians 1.3-14**

**Homily**

When families get together and start telling stories about growing up, or what happened years ago, the same events sound very different as different people tell the story. These stories can have different emphases and may even be happy or sad - depending on who is doing the telling. Our memories can play tricks on us and are very selective at times.

We may try thinking about this very human business of memory and storytelling in light of the wonderful poetry of the first 14 verses of John's Gospel. This is actually the Christmas Story, the third time the Bible tells it. It is the same story that Luke tells - the story of the

manger and the Shepherds and the Angels; and the same story Matthew tells in his Gospel - with Joseph's dreams and the wise men; but the point of view is different. John is a theologian, and a mystic. So he writes of its meaning, from his theology, and from the holy imagination of his prayers.

John does begin the story earlier - he reminds us that Christmas really begins just before where Genesis begins - before the beginning with God in creation. So, using language evocative of Genesis, John begins by talking about the Word of God - the Word of God here is God in action, God creating, revealing, and redeeming.

In addition to telling the same story, Matthew, Luke, and John share one special way of telling it - there is one image, one symbol, and only one, that they all use to talk about Christmas. They all talk about light - the light of the star, the light that shone around the shepherds, the true light that enlightens every human person. They all continue Isaiah's vision of light shining on those who live in darkness.

Where Christ is, people who understand talk about light. They have to - there is no better image of what is going on. The light shines in the darkness - John proclaims. And somehow we understand this, in large part, because we know about darkness - we know what it is like to live in and with darkness. And we know what it is like to live like that in broad daylight.

But, what John, and Luke and Matthew all say about Christmas is that a light begins to shine: suddenly, quietly, but absolutely certainly. And by that light we can begin to see. By that light we can begin to see who we are and who we are created to be. For it is in the person of Jesus that what it means to be a human being is finally made clear. In him we see that our lives are made whole as we surrender them in love and service; in him we see that really being alive means risking everything for - and because of - the love of God and the Kingdom of God. In him we see that hope needs never be abandoned - never - and that there are possibilities beyond our imagining.

Also, by that light that has come into the world we begin to see God really clearly for the first time. "No one has ever seen God," John reminds us. But God is made known to us in Jesus. So all that we thought about God, all we had worked out, all that we were sure we knew about God - all of that is put to the test in Jesus. Who God is, in relationship to us, is fully revealed in Jesus. Not in one saying or one parable, or one miracle - but in all of him - in his life, death and resurrection - we finally have the light to see God.

Perhaps this strange and wonderful moment will call all of us, as communities of faith, to a new journey this coming year, to a new path and a renewed understanding of ourselves and into a new way of life. What will that journey look like? In concrete, precise, measurable terms, we simply don't know. But the Good News before us today is that God in Christ is and will be our light and life for that adventure before us; and our Life and Light, promised to us from before the foundations of the universe were laid down, has been born into our midst.

The light of Christ, the word made flesh, comes among us, and we celebrate its coming into the world. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. Amen.

### **Conversation Questions**

1. Where does the light of Jesus Christ shine in your life?
2. How can we reflect the light of Jesus so that others may see it?
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,  
in the birth of your Son  
you have poured on us the new light of your incarnate Word,  
and shown us the fullness of your love:  
help us to walk in his light and dwell in his love*

*that we may know the fullness of his joy;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.*

*(or)*

*God our Father,  
in love you sent your Son  
that the world may have life:  
lead us to seek him among the outcast  
and to find him in those in need,  
for Jesus Christ's sake.*

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