

Christmas Day 2021

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
Amen.**

Last evening we heard the “traditional” Christmas story with all of its well-familiar scenes of the Holy Family, animals, innkeeper, shepherds, and, of course, lots of angels hovering about. It is “Christmasy” and what we expect to hear. It provides an image of the events as they took place. To be sure, Matthew, Luke, and John all tell of the coming of Jesus in different ways. Today, the First Chapter of John’s Gospel is appointed to be read as our Gospel Lesson. If you’ve attended daily Mass or any of the High Masses, you’ll know this Gospel as the “Last Gospel” because its words are the last we hear before departing. But this is, in fact, THE Christmas Gospel. Unlike other accounts, John straight to the meaning and significance of Our Lord’s Coming.

Saint John tells us that Christmas is about the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Word being made flesh and dwelling among us. Christmas is about how God is to be received and believed in flesh and blood, in Jesus Christ.

This morning, I want to briefly look at some of those words we heard proclaimed just moments ago.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

John is clear in identifying that Jesus, born of Mary, is the Creator of the world become a creature, the Word made flesh. Since the creation did not recognize its Creator, he came unto his own.

But as we know, *His own received him not.*

This is the single sentence of judgment and condemnation John offers. The great offence, the ultimate sin and shame he puts forth, is this rejection and refusal. Did no one in Bethlehem ever notice what desperate straits they were in?

The whole Christmas story is told there by John. He records the rejection, no room in the inn, Herod's murderous rage, in one short phrase: "he came unto his own and his own received him not."

John means that when God came to his own people, they did not accept what was offered, they did not welcome or receive him, they refused the gift.

The whole story of Jesus is the record and summation of our failure to recognize God's divinity and our humanity.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

Here, John gives the meaning of Christmas short and sweet. It is about receiving and believing Jesus. Jesus was born that we might be born again; born a human child that we might be reborn the children of God. John says this happens by “believing” and “receiving” That, is, believing on his Name; knowing him as God of God, born of the Virgin Mary. By this faith and acknowledgment, by this believing and receiving, we become the Children of God.

And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us.

Actions really do speak louder than words, especially to people who are lost in their own noise and business, who have become deaf to the Word of God. So the Word was Made Flesh. God speaks most loudly by this act, by the Incarnation, by the Birth of Jesus Christ, being born as one of us for all of us, the Word become a Baby to be received and believed.

Again, actions speak louder than words, and the Word will be silent again, in his Cross and Passion, becoming obedient unto death, dying as one of us for all of us. God’s message to the world is Christ crucified, to be received and believed.

Christmas is to receive and believe Jesus Christ the Lord, the Word made Flesh. It is to be touched and changed by this gift of God, of God giving himself to us and for us.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen.