

Christmas Day
(Isaiah 52:7-19 / John 1:1-18)
25.12.2021

A Christmas gift to our community for this year is the beautiful creation chasuble worn for this morning's Solemn Eucharist of the Lord's Incarnation. The frontal of the chasuble does what the Gospel text heard this morning (the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel) seeks to do. It evokes for us the story of creation. The opening chapter of John's Gospel resonates with expressions we recognise to be an echo of the Creation Story in the Book of Genesis. The beautifully poetic and grandiose word picture of John 1:1-18 was designed by the Beloved Disciple to paint what might be thought of as *the big picture of Jesus*. John opens his Good News account by portraying Jesus as the *One in whom and through whom all that is was created and in whom and through whom all is being recreated*. In the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel the evangelist wants to tell us not only who Jesus *was* and the meaning of His mission while on earth – what He came into this world to do *in time past*, but who and what Jesus *is* for all of us today, in the *here and now* of our existence.

John opens his Gospel by telling who and what Jesus *was*. He writes: *In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through Him. All that came to be had life in Him and that life was the light of men.* But, if John tells us what the Word *was* in the beginning, he doesn't stop there. He goes on to tell us who the person of the Word *is*, who He who existed from the dawn of time *is* for us today. He tells us that the Word who *was* with God *is* God with us in the here and now. *He is a light that shines in the dark.* He is in the present, as much as He was in the past.

The Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us: *Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.* John emphasises that the light shines today as much as when it was first created and as much as it radiated during Jesus' lifetime.

Later on in John's Gospel we will be reminded that we are meant to live as reflections of Christ's own light. We will hear Jesus who could declare *I am the light of the world* speak the following words to His disciples (and, through them, to us): *You are the light of the world!*

In the Prologue to his Gospel account, John's purpose is not just to look back. It is certainly not to propose to his readers to look back in a way that would keep them stuck in the past. John does not seek to give his readers a history lesson. Rather, the evangelist seeks to have his readers think of their present situation and look forward to the future. A Prologue always looks forward!

John's interest – or rather what he wants to be *our* interest – does not lie only in what the Word did at the beginning of time, however long ago we date the creation of the world. Nor does it lie just in what the Word did when it took on flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth two thousand years ago. John's interest is what the Word is doing here and now, in the concrete reality of our lives; what the Word wants to accomplish in and through us in this day and age.

In this reflection I certainly won't attempt to say all that the Word has done in the past and/or what the Word wants to do in and through us in the present.

What I propose to do is to zoom in on and draw attention to just one thing the Word longs to do in our lives today... and that is to enlighten them, and, through us, to enlighten others.

The image of light is such an important one. Everything depends upon it. Without light there can be no life. In the Creation Story all begins with these four words: *Let there be light*. The

light that emerged from the darkness brought into being all that emerged in the created order. Light brought life into being.

While the Prologue of John's Gospel evokes the person of John the Baptist as the one *sent to bear witness to the light*, what the evangelist wants to do is to turn our attention to the person whom He sees to be the light's source: Christ Jesus Himself! John declares of Christ-Jesus through whom *all that is came into being: The Word was the true light that enlightens all men; and He was coming into the world*. However wonderful that statement might sound to us, it is not the climax of the Prologue. It is not the most striking point made in the text we are considering this morning.

The climax of the Prologue of John's Gospel is found in another little verse in which it is stated *the Word was made flesh and lived among us*. This climax of the Prologue of John's Gospel parallels that of the first Creation Story which reaches its highpoint with the creation of *man and woman – made in God's own image and likeness*. We heard proclaimed this morning: *The Word was made flesh, He lived among us, and we saw His glory, the glory that is His as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth*. John tells us that, in the person of Jesus, it is God Himself who has come to be with us. *He who was from the beginning; He through whom all that is was made*. The Infinite God, who is the source and origin of the life of the whole universe, *became flesh and lived among us*. Our Creator God took on our human nature and wrapped Himself in the flesh of the vulnerable infant born of Mary. How marvellous is that!

The Word still lives among us!

Clearly, John wants us to grasp that not only for a period of time two thousand years ago was it possible to see God *face to face* and relate to Him *person to person* in Jesus of Nazareth, in what Christians call the time of *God's incarnate life*. What John wants us to understand is that we can and are meant to relate to Christ in each other today. He was us to understand that we can relate to Him *face to face, person to person* in each other. As humans, *made in God's image and likeness*; as the *Children of God*, we can and should relate to each other *in Christ...* and do that this day and every day of our existence.

The point to be grasped today is that Christ is alive. He is '*enfleshed*' in each and every one of us, in each and every person we meet.

John declares: *Out of His fullness we have all received grace upon grace*. We continue to receive *grace upon grace*.

The real Good News of the Gospel is that we are God's own people.

If in and through Jesus of Nazareth God visited the world two thousand years ago, and pitched His tent among His people, today it is through you and me that the Lord seeks to be present to the world; it is through us that He seeks to be with people in their longings, their hopes and their needs.

Just as the darkness and emptiness that covered the earth was transformed by the light that sprang forth when God spoke His life-giving word which brought all that is into being, so the words that we speak in echo to God's word should be life-giving; so our whole way of relating to others should be a true blessing of life and peace for them.

May this Christmas day see all of us commit ourselves to be reflections of God's own light. We shall be to the extent that we pose attentive gestures and speak caring words; to the extent that our lives are expressions of love: God's love which takes on flesh in true human love; other-focused, selfless love... love which gives itself totally.

Amen!