

For four weeks of Advent, we have prepared our hearts for the coming of the Lord. For four weeks, we have looked forward with hope to this celebration of the Lord's Nativity at Christmas. And now we rejoice. Now we sing with all the angels in heaven that great hymn of praise: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to people of good will!"

In this joyful celebration, Holy Mother Church offers for our meditation one of the most beautiful passages in all of Sacred Scripture - the beginning of the Gospel according to St. John. St. John's prologue is so filled with beauty and truth that for centuries this passage was read by the priest at the end of every Mass. And while this tradition of the last Gospel has largely passed away, the beauty and the truth of St. John's prologue remain.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." St. John describes here the second person of the Trinity - the Word of God, the Logos. This Word was with God in the beginning, before anything else existed, because the Word Himself is God. And it is through this Word that God creates all things. Everything in the universe - the heavens and the earth, the birds and the fishes and the animals on the land, the angels of heaven, and each one of us human persons - all of this was created and was given order through the Word.

Now we might be tempted to think, as many do, that this Word of God who created all things is far above our reach, that this God is seated upon His lofty throne not interested in us, not interested in the affairs of our lives. But the Word of God is not a distant god, He is not an uncaring god far away from us. No, instead He is a God who shares Himself with us. He is a God who cares for us, who loves us, each one of us, personally. He is a God who has come to us.

“And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth.” The only Son of God, the Word, the Logos, the Second Person of the Trinity, God himself has taken on our human flesh and has dwelt among us. The Creator of heaven and earth has entered into His own creation. The Lord has come to us. These are the glad tidings that Isaiah prophesied: “The Lord comforts his people, he redeems Jerusalem.... all the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God.” This is why the angels came down from heaven to sing the joyful hymn of Gloria. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us!”

This mystery of the Incarnation - that the Word became flesh - is so familiar to us. We profess our faith in the Incarnation every week at Mass. We celebrate Christ’s birth every year at Christmas. Yet, this mystery is so utterly profound that we will never fully comprehend it.

But our inability to understand this infinite mystery doesn't mean that we should not enter into this mystery in our prayer and meditation. It doesn't mean we should not ask "why?". And when we enter into this question, we join the reflection of the Church for 2,000 years as our fellow Christians have asked this question: Why did the Word become flesh? Why did the Son of God take on our human nature and become one of us?

And in her centuries of reflection and meditation on this question, Holy Mother Church has offered us answers, even in the prayers of the liturgy itself. Why did the Word become flesh? First, the words of the Creed give us an answer: "For us men and for our salvation, He came down from heaven." Jesus was born for us and for our salvation. Through sin, we had become slaves to sin and death. But through the Incarnation, we are redeemed, we are ransomed from that slavery, we are set free. The Word became flesh to win our salvation.

And the Word became flesh not just for our salvation, but for us. Jesus was born so that by taking on our human nature He could become like us in all things but sin. And since He is one like us, Jesus has become our model for holiness. "Love one another as I have loved you." By sharing our human nature, Jesus shows us the way to the Father, He becomes our perfect model of holiness, He teaches us how to love.

But there's more. Why did the Word become flesh? A final and most beautiful answer is found in one of the prayers of the Mass that most of you never hear spoken. As you have probably noticed, there are several times throughout the Mass when the priest or the deacon whispers a quiet prayer. One of those times is at the preparation of the chalice. As the deacon or priest pours a drop of water into the wine, he prays: "By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled Himself to share in our humanity." Why did the Word become flesh? Why did Jesus take on our humanity? So that we may come to share in His divinity! St. Athanasius said it this way: "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God." Jesus, the Son of God, shows us how to become sons and daughters of God. The Word became flesh not to leave us here on earth, but to draw us up to heavenly union with God.

This is the mystery, this is the beauty of the Incarnation that we celebrate this Christmas - The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us! Here, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Jesus continues to be present on earth. Here, in the Eucharist, the Son of God continues to lead us to Communion with God Our Father. Let us lift our hearts to God in prayer in this Holy Mass. In the Body and Blood of Christ that we receive, may we recognize the Real Presence of the Christ-child, who was born for us in Bethlehem. And may the grace of this

sacrament allow us to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled Himself to share in our humanity.