

Christmas Eve 2021

I take as my text tonight the passage from St. John appointed as the Last Gospel:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Let the words of my mouth and meditation of my heart be alway acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer.

Tonight, we are celebrating a wonderful moment in time, that moment in the fullness of time when God came into the world as one of us, entering into our time and space as a human child, and taking upon himself our flesh, condescending to be with us and among us, experiencing our emotions: our fears, our longings, our pain and sorrows, our joys and our love.

I cannot, without deep emotion, think upon the wonder of that moment; how all of His creation must have rejoiced at His very presence. Here was God, the Creator, all powerful and all-knowing, entering into the physical world where we could touch him and see him; our Creator becoming one of his own creation.

Before that moment in time, we could only, at best, hear his voice through the prophets, such as we heard tonight during the Lessons and Carols, with readings from the Prophet Isaiah.

Though we have no official record of his birth, only the Gospel accounts, we are assured that our Lord Jesus Christ entered this life in the very same manner that we all do. And from that moment on, he grew, felt, and functioned just as we do. Yet, he was God, Very God of Very God.

In a very real sense, this was to be a new beginning for mankind. Indeed, that is how St. John begins his Gospel —

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

We have just experienced the fall season, a busy time of the year when nature changes before our eyes. It's not the end but it's not the beginning either. Fall is more a time of preparation, preparation for something to come — that something to come is not necessarily an end but, perhaps, after a long winter, a new beginning. Nevertheless, it's a preparation.

We think of spring as a beginning, and, most certainly, it is, of a sort, a beginning when all of nature renews itself, and all of God's Creation seems to come alive again.

But there is a real beginning, a time when all things were created and came into existence, not in a haphazard fashion of randomness but in an orderly manner governed by laws.

We tend to call these rules that govern all of creation laws of nature but, in reality, they are divine laws. Without them we would not have fall or spring, summer, or winter.

Yes, there was a time, in the beginning, when all things were created, not by accident, not without reason, for we are the prime examples of a reasonable creation by a divine Creator.

We are a creature of reason — if this were not so, we would not be able to question our beginning; we would not be able to exercise the faculties which distinguish us in the world we inhabit.

More and more, science, based on our uniquely endowed reason, has verified that creation is governed by laws, and has found that even randomness is orderly.

But it was not science that revealed to us the origin of our existence.

It was God himself who revealed to us our divine origin and purpose.

St. John, in his Gospel, expresses it most beautifully in the very first verses:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

In his Gospel, we come to understand that it was God who, through his Son, created everything, not without a purpose, for our purpose is to become the sons of God through the worship of our Creator.

For that reason, God sent his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into the world that through him we might have life, life for the purpose that God intended, life eternal with him.

Just as with all his creation, God provides us with laws to govern our lives; but, because we were created in his image, that is, endowed with reason, we alone of all creatures have the free-will to accept or deny our Creator, to love or not love, to obey or to disobey.

St. John touches on that, saying:

He came unto his own and his own received him not. But such as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God.

What St. John tells us in his Gospel is so easily verified by the beauty of God's creation.

What has muddied the waters of reason is our free-will, that awesome capability to go against what has been reasonably demonstrated, and it has led human beings to falsely believe that, as the pinnacle of God's Creation, we are somehow better than our Creator.

But there is still hope; and we celebrate that hope every year with the **Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ**, the **Light** that shines in the darkness from the beginning.

Now, this very night, we celebrate that most joyous event in all of creation, the **Incarnation**, God taking on our flesh, our humanity.

What we are celebrating at Christmas is unique; for once, and only once, did God take on human nature of the Blessed Virgin. This is not something that was ever repeated or would ever be done again. Jesus Christ is not just one of the prophets or a great teacher; he is God and man.

In commemorating the wonderful Birth of Jesus Christ, we can find no other event, save his **Death on the Cross**, with which to compare it, and which elicits such deep love, devotion, and adoration.

It is astounding — first the Angel telling Mary that God had chosen her to be the mother of his Son; the journey to Bethlehem where Mary and Joseph could find accommodations only in a stable; then, the wonderful Birth of the Baby Jesus announced to the shepherds by a chorus of Angels:

***Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth
peace, good will toward men.***

The shepherds made their way to the stable, and found it just as the Angels had said, Mary and Joseph, with the Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

***Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good
will toward men*** — each time we rehearse those majestic words, we too are joining with that heavenly host to give glory and praise to God for all his wondrous works, and especially to give thanks for that glorious event.

However complex the theology of the **Incarnation** may be, or intense the efforts to discredit the Biblical records, nothing can ever overshadow the simple beauty of that singular event in all of history: the birth of the eternal Son of God, in the most common of circumstances, to loving parents, who, not fully comprehending the enormity of the event, nonetheless, put their faith in God and willingly became instruments of his Divine Love and Peace.