

Homily for the 2nd Sunday after Christmas

The gospel of John has no account of the birth of Jesus, rather the evangelist chooses to begin his story with a poem which is the gospel for this Mass. The gospel begins with the Word dwelling eternally in the bosom of the Father. This is the mystery that is at the beginning of all that is created. It is through the Word that all things came to be: the whole of creation, including ourselves, have the stamp of the Word somehow in the very depths of our being. If we ponder this for a moment, it must affect how we treat one another, how we use precious resources, indeed how we treat the whole of creation,

From speaking about all of creation and all time, the Gospel now speaks of one human being: John the Baptist. God's care is not just for the whole of creation as a generality: God enters into the personal lives and histories of each one of us in our specific situations and cultures, with all our problems and limitations as well as our talents and possibilities. John the Baptist was sent from God. He had a task unique to his moment and place in human history: 'to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him.' In this he is our role model, because each of us has this same task within our own situation, our own moment, in our own small world. We are 'not the light, but' are called 'to bear witness to the light.' Whenever the light is obscured by our failures, by the poor suffering while we enjoy plenty, by our indifference in the face of evil in its many forms, we fail in our basic vocation of bearing witness to the light.

Now the Word enters the history of the creation as an individual: not in a massive display of force – we tend to think of force and power when we think of the divine – but in gentleness. He was already in the depths of everything created; now he entered the creation, in a new way, to bring all to perfection. Christ is not a policeman announcing rules alien to us, but gently calling us to come to that perfection of which each of us is capable. 'He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.' This is who we are: the children of God, those who have accepted his life into their own lives in baptism. The Word has become flesh: this has been the reason for all our celebrations at Christmas; we have beheld his glory, this is why we can be a joyful people. The Word has pitched his tent among us, in all our needs, among our sufferings, in the ordinary ups and down of everyday life.

So who are we that have gathered here for this Eucharist? What has happened to us to bring us together as a community of sisters and brothers, charged with a common task and with individual distinct vocations? We are those who have received 'from Christ's 'fullness'. We 'have all received, grace upon grace'. Life with God, life in the divine presence is ours because of Jesus Christ: ' grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.' We are the people to whom the Lord offers strength in weakness, to whom he offers comfort for our wounds, healing for our illnesses, sight for our blindness, wisdom for our stupidity, and forgiveness for our sins. In Jesus we have seen our God made visible: 'No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is nearest to the Father's heart, he has made him known.'

Bidding Prayers for the 2nd Sunday after Christmas

Celebrant:

As we begin this New Year of 2022 let us praise the Word who was in the beginning with God and who became flesh for us and dwelt among us.

Reader:

For the Church – that the Church will always proclaim God's Word, not only by what it says but by what it does, especially for those most in need.

Lord in your mercy

For Governments and world leaders – that at the beginning of this New Year of 2022 they will do all they can to bring peace to every nation on earth.

Lord in your mercy

For the people of Afghanistan – that they, and especially women and girls, will be treated with respect and dignity, and that they will receive the humanitarian aid so needed at this time.

Lord in your mercy

For all those in hospitals and Care Homes, especially those closed to visitors because of Covid – that they will receive the care and stimulation they need for their health and well being.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the Covid 19 pandemic, for Fr Bernard Battle a retired priest of the diocese who died recently, and Jill Bickers, George Sparkes, Jack Buckley, Mary Heselwood, Geoff Haigh, Ken Hawsworth, Tony Gowridge, John Hanlon, Frank Wostenholme, Anthony Cox and Michelle Bickers whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

Almighty, ever living God, light of every living being, fill the world with your glory, and reveal to all nations the splendour of your presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen