

Christmas Day 2009 – *The Word Made Flesh*

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

You are accustomed to me bewailing and disparaging our flesh – and it is right that I do so. For although in the beginning God created us in His image and declared us – Adam and Eve ... and the whole of the human race that would spring forth from them – to be **very good**, **after** the Fall our flesh is so corrupt that it can no longer do anything truly good on its own. Thus, now, all that we think, say, or do – apart from God working in us by His Word and Spirit – is so tainted with this corruption that GENESIS 6.5 says of us: ***The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*** Just in case you are thinking: *Well, that was before the Flood ... surely that is not the case now.* Recall what our Savior says over two thousand years later: ***For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness*** [MK 7.21-22]. And that is **still** our problem – yours and mine – even on *Christmas* morning ... as much as we hate to have to admit it! Because of the corruption of our sinful flesh, we had become separated from God ... and heaven had become separated from earth – both contrary to God’s good creation.

But that is precisely the beauty and wonder and mystery of *Christmas*! For the message of *Christmas* is this: That our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came **into** our human flesh – as we heard in the Holy Gospel for *Christmas Day*: ***And the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us*** [JN 1.14]. The Incarnation – the becoming flesh – of our Lord teaches us how much God desired to restore His fallen creation. That ***the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us*** teaches us just how very much God loves us ... and wants us to be reconciled to Him.

One of the early heresies the Church had to deal with was the idea that spirit and flesh ... heaven and earth ... are so separated – by God’s design – that never the twain shall meet. Extreme examples of this “separatist” thinking allowed a person to commit any number of sins in the flesh – and held that his spirit remained untouched ... pure before God. That notion is alive in us today – in the form of “what I do on Sunday and what I do during the week have nothing to do with each other.” We fall into this error when we so separate our spiritual lives and our daily vocations that we fail to let God’s Word have its influence on our

daily lives. Another extreme is the teaching that the heavenly and earthly remain so separated that what is in heaven cannot possibly be down here on earth – that the finite/terrestrial is not capable of receiving and containing the infinite/celestial. This leads in particular to the teaching that the Body and Blood of Christ cannot be here on earth in, with, and under the Bread and the Wine of the Sacrament – because earthly Bread and Wine could not possibly contain the heavenly and very real Body and Blood of our Lord. And we ourselves fall into such thinking when we on the one hand act like we can get away with this or that sin if no one else is looking (as if God is too far away to see the sins we commit hiding under cover of darkness) ... or when we on the other hand despair as if God is so far away that He doesn't know (let alone care) about the current trial or tribulation we are undergoing.

But our Lord has cast down all such false and sinful notions by Christ's Incarnation. By holy inspiration St. John declares that it is so with the profound phrase: *And the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us*. He Who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth [GEN 1.1] has put back together that which had been wrongfully separated due to the Fall. Heaven and earth are joined again – in the Person of Jesus Christ. God once again walks the earth in the cool of the day (as it were) – in the Person of the Word made Flesh. The heavenly God converses again with His earthly creatures – in the Person of the Word made Flesh.

What God has joined, let no man put asunder — as if we could actually sever that Holy Spirit wrought union between God and man in Christ!

When the Apostle & Evangelist says: *And the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us*, he is saying that this is forever so. The eternal Word is now and forever also a human being born in a stable in Bethlehem. Christ is forever both God and Man. Where you see the Son of God – there you see the Son of Man. Where you see the Infant Christ in the utterly vulnerable weakness of our human flesh ... lying in a manger ... fast asleep – there you see the Almighty God Who holds in His powerful hands heaven and earth ... watching over you. Where you see the Man Jesus Christ bleeding and dying on the Cross – there you see the Divine Lamb of God ... God Himself ... taking away the sins of the world ... and dying. Where you see the crucified Jesus rising to life on Easter morning – there you see the Lord of Life reviving from the clutches of death and the grave. And where you see the Son of God ascending to His heavenly throne – there you see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Father in His risen and glorified Flesh ... and with

Him **your** humanity, which He has taken into Himself, also being drawn into heaven.

That *the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us* means that your redemption has come. For, as the Psalm says: ***Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life*** [PSA 49.7]. Only *The Word Made Flesh* could live our life in our stead in the weakness of our mortal flesh – and win the victory over sin, death, and devil. Only *The Word Made Flesh* could bear the sins of the whole world in our stead in the weakness of our human flesh – and yet remain sinless. Only *The Word Made Flesh* could offer the sacrifice sufficient for the sins of the whole world ... receive the eternal wrath of God against all sin ... and not turn back from His arduous task – and then rise to life again on the Third Day ... victorious once-and-for-all.

Therefore: *Rejoice, rejoice this happy morn, a Savior unto us is born, the Christ, the Lord of glory! For the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]