

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
The Solemnity of Christmas, Dec. 24-25, 2018, 10 a.m. Day Mass, Cycle C

At the Christmas Night Mass, we hear St. Paul proclaim: "The grace of God has appeared saving all." In Luke's nativity story, the angels tell the shepherds: "Today in the city of David, a Savior has been born for you who is Christ the Lord." And so, we come to Christmas once again, rejoicing, along with St. Paul, and the angels who sang to the Shepherds, that in Jesus, born in Bethlehem, our God has become one with us in our flesh – one with us in our broken, wounded world.

If we truly believe in that miracle that took place over 2000 years ago with the birth of Jesus – that God became human, that we humans might become divine – then our hearts should be giddy with joy on this most holy of days. The wonder of Christmas should reawaken the child in the hearts of us all. The joyous Spirit of Christmas recalls for us what Jesus once said: "you must become like children, if you wish to enter the Kingdom of God." Jesus wants our eyes to sparkle like children's eyes on Christmas morning. Jesus wants our hearts to leap with delight when we behold the manger scene giving us a window into that miracle of God made flesh – a miracle that is still unfolding in our lives today. Taking our cue from children, our spirits should shout with gleeful joy on Christmas – for again, as St. Paul said: "The grace of God has appeared saving all."

No biblical text expresses better the good news of Christmas than Chapter One from the Gospel of John – the gospel passage read for Mass during Christmas Day John's Gospel proclaims:

"In the beginning was the Word and The Word was with God and The Word was God"

And John then proclaims the shocking news:

"The Word became Flesh and made his dwelling place among us."

What was considered absolutely impossible – the complete union of Creator and creature, the eternal and the mortal – has been achieved; for as Gabriel told Mary "for nothing will be impossible for God." As the great 20th Century theologian, Karl Rahner, once reflected on the incarnation: "Incomprehensible God, adventurer of love!" In other words, God as Word, in Jesus, born in Bethlehem, took on the ultimate adventure by entering time and becoming one with us in flesh.

In Jesus, born in Bethlehem, God revealed himself to us. Jesus reveals God to us. And what kind of God does Jesus reveal to us? Well, look very closely at the Nativity Scene! Look real close at the manger the child is lying in! Why the manger is a food trough for animals and "Bethlehem" means "house of bread"! Our God became our food, our strength, and our nourishment. The wood of the manger becomes the Wood of the Cross – the face of Jesus reveals a God who suffers with us in our human misery, a God of compassion (feels with us), a God who through His Cross turns our darkness into light. In Jesus, God became the true food who gives us eternal life.

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If we truly believe that in Jesus, God is flesh – Immanuel, one with us, then we must rejoice, we must break through the barriers of cynicism of our modern world and recapture the joys of our youth. For on that First Christmas over 2000 years ago a new day dawned. Jesus, the grace of God, was born in Bethlehem. So yes, like children, let our hearts be full of glee.

As Pope St. Leo the Great said on Christmas 1600 years ago: “Sadness should have no place on the birthday of Life.”

So, come to the manger scene, wonder with awe, and believe in the mystery of Christmas.

Yes, it is Christmas my friends! The Word of God has become flesh, the human has become divine. Let us rejoice, rejoice, and rejoice some more as we celebrate our great 12-day Christmas Festival.

Song: I wonder as I wander

I wonder as I wander out under the sky,
How Jesus the Savior did come for to die.
For poor on'ry people like you and like I...
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

When Mary birthed Jesus 'twas in a cow's stall,
With wise men and farmers and shepherds and all.
But high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,
And the promise of ages it then did recall.

If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing,
A star in the sky, or a bird on the wing,
Or all of God's angels in heaven for to sing,
He surely could have it, 'cause he was the King.

I wonder as I wander out under the sky,
How Jesus the Savior did come for to die.
For poor on'ry people like you and like I...
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.