

## **CHRISTMAS DAY HOMILY 2019**

*Isaiah 52: 7-10 + Hebrews 1: 1-6 + John 1: 1-18*

10:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. (Spanish): Holy Spirit Catholic Church

Whenever I was a kid and I heard this soaring, poetic passage from the Gospel of John, I always heard the first words as “In the big inning”.

I ate, slept, and dreamt baseball as a kid, so my ears would always perk up at this passage, and the Good News to me was that God was a baseball fan.

Even better, God’s Son, the living Word of God made flesh, was a baseball player, because in the “big inning” was the Word and the Word was God....

As an adult, I’ve not left my love for the baseball behind, but I do now understand this famous passage from John’s Gospel in a slightly different light.

Whereas the evangelist Matthew traces the beginning of the story of Jesus Christ way back to Abraham, our Father in Faith, John goes even further back.

John goes back to the beginning, before the Creation of the world, to a time outside of time.

This is where he traces the beginning of the story of Jesus Christ, to the Word who was God, and was with God, before anything in our world existed.

Everything that has ever existed in this universe came to be through him, everything that exists today and will exist tomorrow can only exist because of Him.

Without Him nothing can come to be.

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, God the Father did so through His Son, the Living and Life-Giving Word of his eternal love.

All life was created through the Father’s love for His Son in the creative outpouring of their Spirit.

The first thing the Divine Trinity created was Light---“Let there be Light” and so it happened.

Light came to be from the Father through His Son, and this light no darkness has ever conquered, nor ever will do so.

We watch in awe as God’s plan through His Son, the Word of Life, begins to unfold. From that Cosmic bang of love flowing from love, life as we know it began.

From this soaring beginning in the first verses of John’ Gospel, from this celestial vantage point, we peer into God’s plan to make all people God’s children.

For suddenly and unexpectedly, the poetic prologue to John's Gospel shifts with the shocking statement in verse 14: "And the Word became flesh." (1:14) We move from the vastness of the universe to a single person, from the enormity of the cosmos to a single person.

Wonder of wonders, the Divine Word, which existed before time, chooses to become part of time by becoming flesh and dwelling among us, literally, "pitching his tent among us."

It is awe-inspiring to consider how the infinite Word limited himself to this finite world, the One through whom everything has been created becoming forever part of His Creation.

God could have saved us from afar, but instead takes our human nature to Himself, as the Eternal Word dwells among us in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Only one word can even begin to explain why the Eternal Word would draw so near to humanity---LOVE.

Love for human drives the Divine Word of God to share fully in the human condition, not just in our material bodies, for the Greek word for flesh, "sarx", encompasses everything we experience as human beings.

So the Son of God, the Eternal Word of Love, embraces our humanity, with all its joys and sorrows, delights and disappointments, from the time he is born in a rush of blood and water to the time of his death, as blood and water pours forth from his pierced side.

God came into human existence with all of its limitations and all of its flaws.

The Word of God, out of love, embraces our brokenness and lowliness.

The Eternal Word of God wants to be close to us, among the small and in the straw, so he can express in human words His love for us and in human actions show us what that love looks like.

The God through whom the cosmos has been created has come close to us in Jesus Christ, in all the specificity of being human, even down to the freckles and the fingernails.

This is all part of God's plan to save us and make us His own, His people, his prized possession.

To continue what God planned from the first day of Creation—to pour God's life and light into our world, to become part of the world God created, so that grace upon grace could flow into our lives.

For the Word became flesh in human history,  
this remarkable act of love took place in time.  
“The gift of the Law came through Moses  
while grace and truth come to us through Jesus Christ.” (1:17)  
But we must take great care in understanding this contrast,  
because too many Christians mistakenly think that one grace (the Incarnation)  
replaces another (God’s love for Israel as expressed through the gift of the Law).

The challenge comes in the translation of one little Greek preposition, “anti,”  
which carries two possible meanings.  
“Anti” can carry the sense of replacement, which is the way our lectionary translates it  
from the Revised New American Bible—“grace in place of grace” (1:16).  
But “anti” can also carry the sense of temporal order,  
which the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible translates as “grace upon grace.”  
It’s one of those amazing things about our faith, that to arrive at a better understanding of  
the Word made Flesh we need to better understand one little word in the human language.

“Grace upon grace” helps us better understand how the grace of the Incarnation  
(God becoming human) builds upon the grace of God’s love for Israel.  
Grace is not being replaced—it is accumulating!!  
God’s history with God’s creation, and especially with humankind  
as the pinnacle of His Creation, has been all grace from the beginning to now.  
First to Israel through Moses and now to us through Jesus Christ.  
The cosmic plan of God, which expresses love most fully in the Word becoming flesh,  
is an accumulation of God’s continuing love for us.

## CONCLUSION: ALWAYS MORE

With God there is always more, and then there is always more.  
The Living Word of God is proclaimed to us on this Christmas Day, feeding our souls.  
The Word who is God takes our flesh today in this Holy Communion,  
by the power of the Holy Spirit.  
Grace upon grace, as God not only has forever been joined to human life,  
but now we humans are filled with the life of God.

So that, miracle of miracles, everything human has the capacity to communicate the light  
and the life of God. By our loving others, we love the God who is love and life itself.

Fr. Joseph A. Jacobi