

Sermon for Christmas Day (High Mass)

Text – John 1

I wish you all a very blessed and merry Christmas. Today is a day of celebration, and festivity, and I hope that you will be drawn closer to its cause and its source – God, incarnate, in the infant Jesus Christ.

Today's Gospel passage is one of the greatest passages in Scripture. John's prologue is much-loved for the beauty of its language, the imagery it evokes, and what it teaches us.

It is rather a cosmic text, going right back to the beginning of all things. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". And in doing so, it reminds us that the Word, which many interpret as a reference to Jesus, existed alongside God since the beginning of creation. "He was in the beginning with God."

The passage reminds us that every living being has the divine spark of life within it. And there is light, and hope, in this world. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it." It is important for us to remember that whatever takes place in our lives, our resilience allows us to be people of hope. This does not mean that we will not face adversity, but it does mean that we do not go through difficulty alone – there are people who love and care for us, and always will.

John then speaks of another John – John the Baptist. He testified to the coming of Jesus, so that all might understand who he is and believe in him. John the Evangelist makes it clear that John the Baptist was not "the light", meaning that he was not the long-awaited Messiah, but that he did point the way to him and the dawning of the true light.

Then we turn to the mystery and wonder of the incarnation. "He was in the world". With these five words we are called to consider the immensity of the incarnation – God becoming human – and just how extraordinary that was, and is. Jesus himself would encounter difficulties – people rejected him, his teaching, and he suffered human cruelty – yet he persisted. He taught those who wished to learn, he helped and healed those in need, and he taught all people that they had been brought back into relationship with the God who created them, and who loves them.

The final line is truly inspiring: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” With these words, John reminds us that Jesus has lived among us, that we have the privilege of learning from him and his teaching, and through that, becoming more deeply connected to God.

Our redemption is found not in anything we have done, but in what God has done, and Christmas is the time when we celebrate that God chose to become human, in order that humanity and divinity might meet in the form of vulnerable human baby, and in doing so, be transformed. Divinity experiences all that it means to be human, and humanity experiences all that is divine.

This is the wonder of Christmas – and the mystery of the incarnation. That God, acting out of love, chose to become human. That God became human is extraordinary enough, but I think the greatest thing about it is why ... Love. Love for humankind, and a desire for us to know how deeply we are loved. God expresses everything in love and through love, and through the best and deepest connection God could possibly make with humankind – becoming one of us.

Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem is the greatest gift we could ever hope to receive, and we did indeed receive it. And the better thing is that, through our yearly celebration of Christmas, we get to receive it time and time again, and be reminded of all that it meant. It keeps it alive, and makes it all the more meaningful, because it was not one and done, but something which we commemorate and celebrate each and every year, in many ways.

I pray that you will all have a happy and a holy Christmas, filled with joy and the presence of God. May peace and love be yours, and with those dear to you, today, and always.

Rev. Dr Emily Fraser
All Saints, South Hobart and St Raphael’s, Fern Tree
Christmas Day
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