

The Nativity of the Lord

My beloved brothers and sisters, one of the most dear of Catholic Prayers is: The Angelus, based upon the salutation of the Angel to Mary. One of the phrases of the prayer, tells us the consequences of Mary's "yes" to the Angel: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us!" The phrase actually comes from the Gospel of St. John, wherein St. John calls Jesus: "The Word Made Flesh..."

John was speaking to both Greek speaking Jews and to the Hellenistic gentiles of his time. The Phrase would have had very special meaning that would have been profoundly shocking to both groups: For the Hellenistic Gentiles, the Greek word: Logos, meant **the one, unifying force** that held the entire cosmos together. For the Greek speaking Jews, the phrase would have meant the "Wisdom of God," which was often personified in the Old Testament, which informs and directs all of God's works, including the whole of creation and sustains the universe. Thus, the Wisdom of God is God.

This is the starting point for St. John's Gospel, in which he identifies Jesus as the Logos, the Divine Word spoken by the Father into time and place, through whom "all things were made." Jesus is much more than just a unifying force; He is God who unifies! The Logos, Jesus, is the glorious, transcendent, personal, creating God who enters into time and our human existence. For the Jews, in declaring Jesus to be the Logos, St. John declares that Jesus is not merely a powerful human King, but God Himself, Emmanuel, come to dwell amongst us!

This is the great miracle and wonder of this day that we celebrate: all of the glory, power and majesty of the hidden God is now made visible to us wrapped in a few strips of swaddling clothes, sleeping helplessly in His mother's arms. The Gospel of St. Luke reminds us, that the child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, will later be wrapped in the winding sheet of death; and laid in a manger, a cow's feeding trough, He will become the Food for Eternal Life in the Eucharist. The two Gospels remind us that the God of infinite Power and Might, truly God and truly man, has come in infinite gentleness and humility, to walk with us in our human heritage. Emmanuel has come to be with us, forever, so that we can be with Him forever- that is what we celebrate this night/day!

Our world today promises us that by our human wisdom, by our human might and strength, we can achieve a heaven upon earth made by our own human effort and might and strength: we have created a nightmare! Jesus shows us the way to the peace and joy every human heart is longing for: by stripping Himself of His Divine Glory, born into our human poverty, emptying Himself of power, becoming utterly vulnerable in the arms of Mary and Joseph, He invites us to empty ourselves into the infinite humility of God, and in doing so, the Divine Child asleep in the peaceful embrace of Mary and Joseph invites us into the peaceful embrace of God Himself!