



GOSPEL GOSSIP

‘The Word became flesh and lived among us’

John 1. 10=18

Sunday 4 January

This week’s Gospel Gossip, rather than posing questions to be considered, is a simple reflection on the opening of St John’s gospel: The word became flesh, the true meaning of Christmas, as we continue to celebrate it, within these ‘twelve days of Christmas’.

A simple, but profound statement, showing the depths of God’s love for humanity. The word became flesh and lived among us.’ Not for the author of John’s gospel are stories of mangers, shepherds, or even Mary and Joseph with a new-born child. John cuts straight to the chase but describing the reality, the true meaning of the Incarnation, the birth of Jesus, summed up in this spine-tingling phrase.

The word, ‘word’ conveys so much, but it is essentially a means of communication, be it spoken, read, sung, expressed visually or even thought. The means of its delivery also gives an indication of the message. An angry word. A kind word. An encouraging word. A reassuring word. A word which means that no-one is alone or isolated or ignored. The Word of God is just like this.

John tells us that THE Word, existed with God before anything else came into being; that the Word was God. This Word became flesh and lived among us, God humbled himself to become a physical part of creation, yet so often we fail to grasp the full significance of the event. Perhaps it is because we focus more on the descriptions of Jesus’ birth as told by the other gospel writers, as they are easier to handle than the stark theological truth. Or is it because we are tempted to succumb to all the commercialism and cultural expressions of Christmas? It’s probably a bit of both, because none of us lives in a cocoon, but in the real world, a world which has not necessarily heard the Word. Some have difficulties in hearing the Word. That could be because there are so many other competing sounds around us. It’s not just the enveloping ‘white noise’ that we all live with, but that actually other words speak more loudly and insist on our attention before or else. And they can be very appropriate words: family, lifestyle, commitments and concerns. All these in every way compete for our attention to hear. How often do we actually separate all the competing words in our lives and prioritise them appropriately? Not as often as we should, which is why become too busy, preoccupied, stressed out. We need to have silence to hear words as messages and not just sound. Yet do we make time to do so, especially to listen for the Word of God.

And how is the Word spoken to us today? The immediate answer is through Holy Scripture (how attentive are we in reading or studying?) and through the Sacraments (how often is attending the eucharist an option not a essential?). These are two very special ways in which the Word is spoken to us today. There is also prayer. If we enter into a conversation, dialogue, with God, it is a two-way thing. God speaks to us as much as we speak to him; we just need to recognise his voice. There is action. Jesus taught us that whatever we do for the least of his brothers and sisters, we do for him. We should accept acts of service to us as privileges not rights, and see how God may be speaking through those around us his Word of love. And there’s the inevitable ‘dark nights of the soul’ when a tiny light breaks up all the darkness around us. That we can experience by accepting that the Word became flesh and lived among us. By knowing that God’s nature and purpose for is love, and his love is expressed so simply and profoundly for ever single one of us, whoever we are, wherever we are, whenever we are. And we can be part of proclaiming the Word, so that it can be heard by all. But only if the Word doesn’t fall on deaf ears.