

GOSPEL MESSAGE

December 25, 2020

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD, CHRISTMAS DAY

Embodied Word, Embodied Love

The beginning of John's gospel starts out sounding like a class in Greek philosophy. Big, abstract words take center stage: *Word, grace, light, life, truth*. These are all concepts that thinkers have pondered since ancient times. "Word," in particular, is a vast philosophical concept that encompasses God's reason, plan, and creative work in the whole world.

John doesn't stick with abstract philosophy, however; this gospel isn't concerned with philosophical musings detached from real life. John, in fact, does something unprecedented in the history of philosophical thinking. John moves on from the amorphous "Word," stating that this "Word" is not out of reach but is instead made concrete in the flesh-and-blood human life of Jesus.

This move from the abstract to the living, breathing Word found in Jesus tells us something important: God isn't concerned with abstract ideas disconnected from real people and their struggles, suffering, hope, and joy. God is deeply concerned with real human life in all of its complexity. And by taking on a living, breathing body, God assumes all the risk, pain, and heartache that human living entails. God's Word is anything but abstract and disconnected.

In fact, God is so invested in connecting to people that God would come into this world as a baby, vulnerable and dependent. God is so invested in connecting with people that God would experience death—even death by execution on the cross. God is so invested in connecting to people that God would risk loving us through Christ, even when we would resist and reject such love. We are reminded of this embodied love each time we celebrate the sacrament of holy communion, receiving Christ's own body and blood into our own bodies. Jesus Christ, God's embodied Word, brings us all into new life.

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