

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

A birth brings new life. A birth brings hope and anticipation of a life to come. Birth is a new beginning, a fresh start. So today we celebrate in joy. But the birth we celebrate is not a typical birth, although it came to pass in humble circumstances. Each day many babies are born. So it was also in Palestine two thousand years ago. Many babies were born. Most were born in good settings – in a house, by a midwife, with family assisting.

But in the case of the birth that we celebrate this day, the mother great with Child was denied a room at the inn. So the Child promised by God, the Child foretold by the Prophets, the Child anticipated and hoped for by every Israelite generation, the Child announced by angelic homily, the Child conceived by the Holy Spirit, the Divine Child of immaculate conception and miraculous birth, was brought forth and laid in a lowly manger in Bethlehem.

The facts surrounding the birth of the Child are clear. and while to believe the facts is good, it will not change your life. To hear the Biblical account and to assent to the veracity of that account doesn't save you from your sins. Many who decorate houses and trees and exchange gifts on this day do not have Christian faith. For to assent to the historic fact of that Child's birth does not save you from your sins.

But to reject the account of the miraculous Virgin conception and birth of God's Son, to deny the Divinity of the Child of Mary, closes heaven to all who will not believe it. For He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world didn't know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. And that is no different today than it was two millennia ago in Bethlehem.

So we do not celebrate as the world celebrates. The birth of the Christ Child brings us a joy that the fallen world cannot know. For we believe that in the birth of the Only-Begotten Son of God, in the birth of Mary's Son, the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us. We believe the Word of Isaiah the Prophet, that that Divine Child the Lord made bare His Holy Arm, which is to say that the Messiah of ancient promise became Man in the womb of the Virgin, and was born in Bethlehem, and was laid in a manger for men to clearly see.

The Word, the Eternal Word, the Word that was in the beginning with God, the Word that was with God, the Word that is God, is that helpless infant wrapped in rags and housed in a stable, the Eternal brought forth in time, the One who filled the heavens filling the manger. That Newborn Babe is the One who is Heir of all things, the One through whom all things were made.

That humble and lowly Child is the Incarnate Brightness of God's Glory, the express Image of His person, who upholds all things by the Word of His power. Fallen reason cannot comprehend this. Exchanging Christmas gifts doesn't confess it. Faith alone, saving faith worked through the Word of God by the Holy Spirit alone, can attribute all this to the Newborn Babe of Bethlehem. For in Him, in that Baby, dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

So faith confesses that Mary's Son, God's Son, begotten of the Father before all things, born of the Virgin in time, is the True Light which gives light coming into the world. That is what faith

celebrates this day – not a fable, not historic facts, but Truth – the Truth that unto you is born in the City of David a Savior – your Savior – which is Christ the Lord, Christ your Lord!

St. John the Divine articulates the eternal cosmic consequences, and the consequences to you in time and space, of that miraculous conception and birth. For the God who is without beginning or end, the Son of God begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, became Flesh and dwelt among us. And as many as received Him, as many as receive Him today, as many as will receive Him in days to come, to them, to you, He gives the right to become children of God – to you who believe in His Name.

To believe in His Name is to believe, as the Apostle writes, to believe of that Holy Infant, that He Himself purged our sins. That He did not in Bethlehem but outside of Jerusalem, not in the manger but on the cross. But more, to believe in His Name is to believe, as the Apostle writes, that God took on Flesh to redeem flesh – to redeem you.

To believe in His Name is to believe that the same Word that was in the beginning with the Father died and was buried, that He defeated death, that He ascended into heaven, and that He reigns over all heaven and earth at the right hand of the Majesty on high, omnipotent, ruling all things from His rightful throne.

For He who was humbled in Bethlehem is now exalted. He to whom the angels ministered has now become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they. So to Him, and to Him alone does the Father say “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom.” And His kingdom will have no end.

Just as He shares in your flesh, and just as you covered in His Blood receive His righteousness, so too for you His Nativity is a birth, a new birth, a miraculous birth. For in Him you are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. The font is the womb of the Church, by which you are miraculously born from above of water and the Spirit. And it is to you that He gives His Body and Blood this day, bidding you Commune with Him in this Christ Mass Feast.

We rejoice this day to recall and publicly confess His historic birth. But Christmas is not just about the past. The heavens and earth are the work of His hands. They will perish, but He will remain. So Christmas is very much about today, and about the future, indeed about eternity. For the Incarnate Word now upholds all things by the word of His power. For just as He became Man to save men, so in His ascension does He open heaven to men by the remission of sins – to you who believe on Him, to all who believe in His Name.

He is the Word made Flesh, in the womb of His mother, in Bethlehem in the manger, standing before Pilate, crucified on the cross, lifeless in the tomb, risen to new life, now in heaven, for He lives and reigns, still God and Man, still the Word made Flesh, still God Incarnate. And this day it is yours to behold His Glory, the Glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, veiled in Bread and Wine, full of grace and truth.

Thanks be to God, the Christ is born! A blessed Christmas!

St. John 1:1-14

The Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2019 A.✠ D.

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.