

“What the ‘reason for the season’ really means”
(Originally titled, “*And the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us*”)
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“Jesus is the reason for the season.” We hear this slogan a lot in the days leading up to Christmas. It has become the slogan around which Christians rally in the laudable attempt to convince people to ponder the true meaning of Christmas, and to ward off those who are intent on keeping Jesus out of the mythical, man-made, “holiday season” they have created for themselves. But, as admirable as it is for Christians to adopt and use a slogan like this, it will do them no good if they are not able to expound upon it. Without further explanation, “Jesus is the reason for the season” is nothing more than a cute saying. Who is Jesus and why is He the reason for the season?

St. John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, provides us with the answer we need regarding Jesus’ identity: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). He goes on to explain that all things were made through this Word, who possesses Life and is the True Light who shines in the darkness of this world. And then comes St. John’s Christmas message: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). And, lest there be any confusion regarding the identity of this Word, St. John makes it vividly clear that He is writing about Jesus Christ, through whom comes grace and truth.

So, St. John reveals to us that Jesus Christ is the Eternal Word and Son of the Father, who became Flesh and dwelt among us. Isaiah prophesied about this seven centuries before Jesus was born: “Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). St. Matthew tells us that the birth of Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, and provides us with a definition of “Immanuel,” which means, “God with us” (cf. Matthew 1:23).

Oh, ponder the mystery, dear friends. The Baby born in Bethlelehem, the Infant lying in the manger, drooling, sucking, soiling His diapers, nursing at His virgin mother’s breasts, burping, and spitting up; the Baby who, accept that He is without sin, is fully human in every way, this Infant Child of Mary, is God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; He is the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, and by Him all things were made. As He lies there in the manger, seemingly helpless, He holds the entire universe in His tiny, wrinkly, newborn hands. It is a mystery so deep, so profound, that the holy angels can never stop looking into it with great wonder.

The Word became Flesh and dwelt among us. The Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity left His place of glory. He came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man. But, why? For one reason – to save us. How? By living the perfect life we are unable to live, fulfilling God’s holy and perfect Law in our place, and by dying on the cross for our sins, paying the full price for all of our transgressions with His holy and precious Blood.

So, yes, Jesus is the reason for the season, for He is the Eternal Word of God, who became Flesh to dwell among us and save us. And, wonder of wonders, the Word still dwells among us to save us. He promised to be with us always, and so He is. Wherever two or three (or more) are gathered in His Name, He is there in His Holy Word and Sacraments to save us and to keep us saved. He will continue to fulfill that promise until He returns in great glory on the Last Day.

Until then, get yourself to the place where the Word still dwells among us, in His Holy Church. Do not let your celebration of Christmas consist only in uttering slogans, but also in coming into the presence of your Lord to be filled with the Divine Gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation with which He longs to fill you. You are more than welcome to join us this Christmas. Our Service of Lessons and Carols will take place on Christmas Eve at 7:00 p.m. and we will celebrate Midnight Mass at 11:30 p.m. Wherever you find yourself this Christmas, I pray that you will join all the faithful in singing, "Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning; Jesus, to Thee be glory giv'n! Word of the Father Now in flesh appearing! O Come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!"

Merry Christmas!
In Christ,
Pastor Messer

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