

Christmas Day (December 25, 2011, 10 AM)

*“And the Word became flesh and lived among us,
and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s
only son, full of grace and truth.”*

✠ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

How powerful is the Word? Powerful beyond compare, we are taught. “No one can tame the tongue,” writes St. James, “a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing” (St. James 3. 8-10). Likewise, in the Proverbs, we read, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18. 21). The tongue, St. James also tells us, is like the rudder of a ship—such a small thing, yet it directs our whole course (St. James 3. 4, 5) towards good or evil; towards life or death—the tongue forms words which reflect our

thinking and feeling, except those words always fall short of accurately representing us completely. Sometimes we deliberately choose to be inaccurate in our words; other times we genuinely desire accuracy but we inevitably fail to precisely represent the incalculable depths of our inner-being. To say we are complicated creatures beyond human measurement is a gross understatement; to admit that the pits of our souls are bottomless would be somewhat closer to the truth. However phrased, in our desire to speak and know truth we are all, in the end, at a loss for words.

With our words we wound others without intention; with our words we wound others with intention. We can deceive with our words; we can love with our words. We can use too many words; we can

fail to use enough words. In our mumbling and in our grumbling, in our stammering and in our yammering, in our failure to find the right words and in our inability to recognize the right words when we trip over them, we are left disoriented. Always searching for the right words: always looking, never finding, never fully knowing.

And yet, in our darkness, Light breaks through. “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” Imagine that if you can! If you can, please let me know. The physical embodiment of God’s Word: the clear utterance of God’s perfection is born in our world of utter confusion. “Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the

prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word" (Hebrews 1. 1-3a). In Old Testament times, God used the lips of mere mortals to speak His perfect Word, but now Perfection Himself speaks. Purity of truth comes forth from the words and deeds—the very life—of Jesus the Anointed One of God. God's own glory, God's own Word full of grace and truth, comes to us now in Jesus. He is not partially God bearing partial truth, but God Himself comes with clarity of expression and of being—"true God of true God, begotten not made"—Jesus is not creation, but the Creator Himself now speaks, and

He speaks the divine language of godly Love. He speaks Light in the midst of darkness; life in the midst of death. Jesus comes so that we may now live beyond the bounds of limited human reason and discourse. We can hardly speak, and we necessarily fail when we do, but as St. Paul writes, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor. 13. 12). We cannot project an accurate reflection of ourselves in this world (for ourselves to see or for others), but God sees us with vision infinitely deeper than our shallow perception will allow, and it is this same God who is born of the Virgin Mary in the world. Today we celebrate that God is indeed with us—even with us mere mortals, as unlovely and as imperfect as we are—so that we may be

seen by God as altogether lovely despite limited human appearances. We cannot praise Him adequately, we cannot use our words to love ourselves or our neighbours aright, yet God takes our intentions, feeble as they are, and He who knows our hearts chooses to see Himself. God's perfect image is restored in us because Jesus has taken on all our ugliness on the Cross, and God now sees His divine Son, His own unmarred image, reflected back to Him when He looks upon His mortal children. As that Christmas song, "Mary's Boy Child" goes, "man will live forevermore / Because of Christmas Day." And for this we have cause to celebrate and rejoice, for we cannot help but come here to honour the Word of Life made flesh for us, who, when our words necessarily fail, speaks to us and for us. We are

not enough, but He is more than we can ask or imagine.

Thanks be to God for Christmas Day!

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, power, glory, might, majesty and dominion, both now and for evermore.