

Christmas, year B – December 25, 2011

My brothers and sisters, what do I say to you on this lovely night/feast? I can only repeat what God has said to us: 'I give you my Word.' And this feast is all about God giving us his Word, because the Word, the second person of the Holy Trinity, has become flesh ours. God has so fallen in love with our humanity that not only has he placed it forever in the heart of the Holy Trinity but has actually entered our history and taken a body like ours. As the prayer in the mass says he shared in our humanity so that we would share in his divinity.

And did he share in our humanity? Yes indeed he did, entering all the narrow limitations of this humanity of ours. He entered into his mother's body, into a small defeated native country under foreign occupation; into a desperate time in history; into a narrow minded environment of bitter politics, into a prison of being misunderstood by others, even his friends; into the monotony of the working day; into a body marked out for death; even into the dark night of seeming to be abandoned by God; into even a borrowed tomb. Oh yes, God values our humanity...infinitely more than we ourselves do because God values us by Jesus Christ.

So we celebrate tonight/today, this great feast of God loving us...and asking us to love each other because we all share in the humanity of Christ. God is not some God out there in the distance far removed from us but a here and now God, Emmanuel, God-with-us. And what that means that eternity is already in the heart of time; life is at the center of death, truth is stronger than lies, love stronger than hatred and our sinfulness conquered by God's merciful grace. Yes, God's mercy, how much we need it.

I heard a story recently from a Cardinal, no, not a ballplayer but one of those eminent guys who wear a red beanie. He told me that he was in Australia last year and was waiting at the airport for his flight. As he waited there was a little boy with his father in the area near him. The boy was about 5 or 6. The father was trying to teach the boy a game but the little boy wasn't too bright and he'd forget what he was supposed to do and he's say: 'Dad, can I begin again?' The Dad would say, 'sure son.' The kid would start the game again forget what he was supposed to do and say: "Dad can I begin again?" Again the Dad would say, 'sure son.' Thus it continued over and over. Finally the Cardinal had enough and moved to another seat but as he was sitting there it struck him that this was just like the

way God treats us...we can always begin again with God. And yes, all of us have made many a new beginnings with this loving, compassionate Christ of ours.

So tonight/today, if there is anyone here who thinks that they can't begin again, please know that you can always begin again with God. That's the God that has come among us, that is the God who is overwhelmingly in love with us. That is the God who is the Jesus of Christmas. No one can take him from us; he has shared our humanity so he knows us through and through; he is our brother; he is Love Itself; he is our Savior and is our Lord; he is... our everything.

A little poem about the one who knew him best, Mary, his mother...and ours looking at this new born who was God's son and hers.

*That he was beautiful,
love's most holy writ.
That he was the world in small,
and she loved it.*

*That he had undone death.
That he would be her joy.
That he would grow more beautiful
as he became a boy.*

*That he was grace in human form
and paradise to hold.
That he smelled like eternity.
That he would not grow old.*

*That he was heaven's gift,
dressed in flesh and baby clothes.
That he was wholly beautiful.
What every mother knows.*