

*A Sermon Preached by Fr Derek Frost  
on 2 January, 2011  
John 1 : 1-14*

When the Book of Common Prayer was the only legal liturgy of the Church of England, the only Gospel Reading provided for the Feast of Christ's Holy Nativity was the one we heard just now, and the one we hear read at the end of Mass most Sundays.

I refer, of course, to that wonderful, mind-stretching Scripture, the first 14 or 18 verses of the first chapter of Saint John's Gospel.

Saint John does not tell of the Angels' visit to Our Lady, or to Blessed Joseph. We do not hear from John about the trip of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. We do not read in his Gospel the story of the Holy Birth in the Stable, or the visits of the Shepherds and Magi – Saint John leaves that to Saint Matthew and Saint Luke.

Saint John starts his Gospel with those profound, wonderful words:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
He was with God in the beginning.  
Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*

Later John records:

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.  
- or to use the old version  
The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*

So what is this Word who was pre-existent with God?  
Who is the Word who is the Agent of Creation and through whom all things came into being?  
Who is this Word who came and dwelt among us?

This Word is the *Logos* or Wisdom, the second person of the Holy and Undivided Trinity. The Word who was made flesh and dwelt among us is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the one who is The Way, the Truth and the Life. That life, Saint John reminds us, is the light of men. It is a light to shine in the darkness of the World, and that darkness will never overcome the light.

The Word, that was made flesh and made his dwelling with us, is the one who was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made Man.

In the little babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger was all the fullness and wonder and glory of God. In the babe of Bethlehem was the light of God sent to bring fullness of life to all Humanity.

That is the mind-bending mystery we celebrate at every Christmas. I don't think we shall ever fully understand the mystery of Christ's Holy Birth and entry into our world but we can fall down either literally on our knees or in Spirit and Worship at the sheer wonder of it.

With the entry of Christ - the Word, the Wisdom of God- into our World we receive a supreme gift from God. For in Jesus is revealed the glory of God and from him flows the Grace of God, the supernatural help of God to help us become sons and daughters of God and conform our lives to His. From his fullness we have all received Grace upon Grace.

In the life of Jesus we see the life and light of God revealed to us. In his teaching we are shown the need to overcome the power of evil and dispel its darkness and we do it by repenting and placing our hope in Christ, and opening ourselves to His Grace, His supernatural help. Our Worship, our Prayer and our Communion makes us receptive to that Grace, so freely given and so amazing in what it helps us to do.

In the supernatural signs of Jesus as he heals the sick, feeds the hungry, forgives the sinner, raises up the downcast and has compassion for all, we are shown the blueprint for Christian living. Any kind deed done to friend or stranger is done to Christ Himself. The blueprint for Christian discipleship is love of God and humanity. In our own strength we will achieve little but by the Grace freely given by Christ all things are possible. From his fullness we have received Grace upon Grace. For the Word that was made flesh and lived among us is full of Grace and Truth. If we believe that then we have the help we need to love God and humanity.

The love and the hope that the Word made flesh, Jesus, brought into our World is certainly shown to us in the stable at Bethlehem and then in the life and teaching of him who brought light into the world.

But it is on a cross against the panorama of darkened sky and amidst shouting and jeering that we see the full extent of the love of the Word made flesh. For in the naked, bleeding, Jesus, nailed to the Cross we see the extent of his love for us. In another mystery he made himself a scapegoat and a sacrifice to take away the sin of the world. What began in a star-lit stable reached its climax on a hill against a black sky.

From his birth to his death Jesus shows to us the Love of God in Action. Love with its source in God has the power to change everything for the better and even to bring good from evil. The darkness cannot overcome it. It was love that came down at Christmas and showed itself to us in Him who was Perfect God and Perfect Man.

The great mystery that we call the resurrection shows us the power of love, that it overcomes all things even sin and death itself. Darkness cannot overcome it.

We who receive Grace up Grace, Help upon Help from Christ must seek to crucify the Sin in our lives, and live in the light of the Risen and Ascended Lord.

The Word of God who was present with God from all Eternity, who was the Agent of Creation.

The Word of God who came and dwelt among us to shine as a light in the darkness of our world and who pours upon us from his fullness Grace upon Grace.

The Word of God who by his life, teaching and action showed the power of God to bring light into our world.

The Word of God who offered himself as the perfect Sacrifice on the Altar of the Cross and destroyed the power of sin and evil.

The Word of God who rose triumphant over sin and death and opens up to us the Kingdom of Heaven.

- He is now our Glorified and Ascended Lord and takes his rightful place at the right hand of the Father.

- He has assumed the glory that was His through all Eternity.

- In the Power of the Spirit he continues to pour upon us Grace upon Grace.

This enables us to:

Love Him more dearly, follow Him more nearly and know Him more clearly.

As we begin this New Year of 2011 may the Word made flesh, who is full of Grace and Truth, pour upon us Grace upon Grace. Then He who is the true light which enlightens everyone may shine in our hearts and by his Grace we may make this year in reality -

**The year of our Lord Jesus Christ**

**2011**