

C. D'Angelo+
Christmas II
2022 January 2
St Thomas's Huron Street
9:30am/11:00am

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” May I speak in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

In a book very recently published on the Prologue of John's Gospel, the social commentator and translator Anthony Esolen argues that our Gospel reading today “is the most significant short piece of writing in the history of the world” (*In the Beginning was the Word*, xvii).

While this may be true, however, the danger for us, is that, even when it comes to a passage of this kind of astounding importance and depth, we can become numb to its meaning by repeated exposure.

We can hear the old, familiar words of something like John's Prologue and yet, the distinct turns of phrase and the well-known vocabulary (of light, of life, of glory, etc.) can so easily wash over us without their significance sinking in deep into our hearts. Indeed, when it comes to examining any passage of Scripture, even one's as well-known to us as our Gospel today, we must continually ask for the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, “to lead us into all truth,” so that in and through the words of Scripture we hear and read we might encounter and know and love Christ the Light, Christ the Way, the Truth and the Life who is with us in our midst.

Fundamentally, St John's Prologue reminds us that the Christian vision of reality is entirely about communication: it is all about how, at the deepest level, everything is personal and everything is relational because all things find their beginning and end in God. St John describes how the means by which all things have been created by God is 'the Word', the *logos*, who gives being and order to all that is but who is also the abiding presence and communication of God's love to and in the world, a world which so often turns away from its source and end, and so, all too often stumbles in the darkness of its own ignorance and confusion.

The darkness of the world, the kind of sorrow, suffering, illness, despair, evil and sin that none of us emerge life unaffected by, can lead us, in our darkest moments to question this idea that everything is about God's self-communication for our good. This is the dominant perspective of our postmodern age in which all grand stories about how things ultimately hang together are subject to, if not indifference, then certainly suspicion and deconstruction. In our time, we are often told in so many ways, that the only meanings and values are the ones that we construct for ourselves, as conscious beings who are able to think about questions of ultimate meaning despite the cold, indifferent, ultimately random, spiritually empty universe from which we have emerged into consciousness.

Yet, the Christian vision of reality articulated by St John could not be any more radically different than this soulless, shallow, unsatisfying vision of cosmic reality which calls for our assent and allegiance from all around.

As we gather in the wake of Christmas anticipating the Feast of the Epiphany, in celebration of the dawning of the true light as a gift for the enlightenment of all people, John's prologue describes how the coming of God in human flesh is an event which speaks to us directly and clearly about the mystery of the meaning of the cosmos which includes a message for each one of us to hear and take to heart about the ultimate meaning of our own lives within that greater whole. This is a vision which begins and ends with the conscious intentionality of God, with the communication of God's love in the creation and redemption of the world by the Word, allowing us to be rooted and grounded and calling us forth into self-giving love.

The Word of God, true God of true God as the Creed would later put it, the source of all things, the God who far exceeds our ability to imagine, comprehend or understand, became flesh and lived among us, becoming visible and tangible in and through the fully human life of Jesus. The God who created all things in power and majesty becomes what is the opposite in great humility: vulnerable, dependent, limited, as one of us, a human being, as a baby.

And, why? For our sake, out of God's great love for each of us. To enlighten us, to bring light into the darkness of human life, to bring light into the darkness of our lives, to give us power to become children of God, born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

In our own crèche scene, as in countless portrayals of the birth of Christ down through the centuries, the baby Jesus is found in the very lowest point of the scene, the smallest figure in it. Showing the Christ child in this way, this coming in great humility, allows us to see that great mystery which we celebrate with joy each Christmas.

With the birth of Christ, God who is the creator of all things in heaven and on earth, draws near to us, descends to us, sharing in our weakness, vulnerability, struggles and fears so that we can be lifted up to know and share in the light, life peace, joy and love of God which transcends all that limits and threatens us here below. For this most precious gift of Christ's Incarnation, made manifest through the waters of baptism and renewed in the Eucharistic mystery, let us offer our thanks and praise now and always. *Amen.*