

TO SUM UP...

(JOHN 1:1-18)



Our Gospel reading today comes from the Fourth Gospel: that account opens with an ancient Christian hymn which reflects on who Jesus Christ is, that he is the supreme means by which God completes the divine self-revealing to human beings. Like all summaries, it is very dense and only states what the author believes: the details of how God is revealed will be set out in the Gospel narrative which follows.

The first words, “In the beginning”, echo the opening of the book of Genesis and tell us that even then, before creation, the Word existed in relationship with God. The central, pivotal point of the passage declares that “the Word was made flesh”: the Prologue, as this hymn is usually known, presents Jesus Christ as the incarnation, the “en-flesh-ment”, of this pre-existent Word. He is light and life to those who accept him and offers the possibility of becoming daughters and sons of God to those who decide to put their faith and trust in his message. But Jesus is not just a messenger: he is the Word. Whatever God is, the Word is: they are so closely identified that Jesus can say that “to have seen me is to have seen the Father”. The Christmas story is thus given a cosmic sweep in the vision of the evangelist we call John. ■

SAY

The Word became flesh and pitched his tent among us.

(see John 1:14)

DO

Look at the words on this sheet: think of how they are a means of communicating, just as the spoken word is. Jesus Christ is God’s word to you personally – what is your response?

LEARN

The opening words of today’s Gospel, “In the beginning”, recall the first words of the book of Genesis.

The masculine term “Word” (*logos*) refers to the feminine figure Wisdom (*Hokmah/Sophia*) in the Jewish scriptures.

There is no narrative about the circumstances of Jesus’ conception or birth in the Gospel according to John: the Prologue sets out the evangelist’s understanding of who Jesus is.

REFLECT

On this Sunday, the Gospel invites us to reflect on the mystery of the coming of Jesus Christ into our world. In the Jewish scriptures, God created by word, by speaking, as in the first chapter of Genesis. But God also operated in the world through the female figure of Wisdom in creating and in communicating with human beings. The evangelist refers to this figure by using the masculine term *logos* (or Word): the “he” who was with God in the beginning looks back to the Word and forward to the person of Jesus.

This deep passage, which we should read as poetry, expresses an advanced understanding of the person of Jesus. It gives the outline of the coming of the Word into the world and the way in which people responded. It holds out to us today the same offer of light, life and becoming children of God. This is a free gift (grace): it is not something that we can earn, we have only to accept it and live by it.

As we approach the end of Christmastide, we might take time to reflect on the past few weeks and what the Christmas story

means to us personally. In the thought of the evangelist John, it is all about God reaching out to us in God’s Word: the term “word” suggests communicating, which is what we do when we speak or write to other people. In Jesus, God is inviting us into an intimate relationship: perhaps we might use this reflection to deepen our relationship with God, because that is what faith is all about, in the end. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

When a profound silence covered all things
and night was in the middle of its course,
your all-powerful Word, O Lord, bounded
from heaven's royal throne.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
splendour of faithful souls,
graciously be pleased to fill the world with
your glory,
and show yourself to all peoples by the
radiance of your light.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Ecclesiasticus 24:1-2,8-12

A reading from the book of Ecclesiasticus.
Wisdom speaks her own praises,
in the midst of her people she glories in
herself.
She opens her mouth in the assembly of the
Most High,
she glories in herself in the presence of the
Mighty One.

"Then the creator of all things instructed me,
and he who created me fixed a place for my
tent.

He said, 'Pitch your tent in Jacob,
make Israel your inheritance.'
From eternity, in the beginning, he created
me,
and for eternity I shall remain.
I ministered before him in the holy
tabernacle,
and thus was I established on Zion.
In the beloved city he has given me rest,
and in Jerusalem I wield my authority.
I have taken root in a privileged people,
in the Lord's property, in his inheritance."

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 147

Response:
The Word was made flesh,
and lived among us.

or
Alleluia!

- O praise the Lord, Jerusalem!
Zion, praise your God!
He has strengthened the bars of your
gates,
he has blessed the children within you (R.)
- He established peace on your borders,
he feeds you with finest wheat.
He sends out his word to the earth
and swiftly runs his command. (R.)
- He makes his word known to Jacob,
to Israel his laws and decrees.
He has not dealt thus with other nations;
he has not taught them his decrees. (R.)

SECOND READING Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Ephesians.

Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus
Christ, who has blessed us with all the
spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ. Before
the world was made, he chose us, chose us
in Christ, to be holy and spotless, and to live
through love in his presence, determining
that we should become his adopted sons,
through Jesus Christ, for his own kind
purposes, to make us praise the glory of his
grace, his free gift to us in the Beloved.

That will explain why I, having once heard
about your faith in the Lord Jesus, and the
love that you show towards all the saints,
have never failed to remember you in my
prayers and to thank God for you. May the
God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father
of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and
perception of what is revealed, to bring you
to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten
the eyes of your mind so that you can see
what hope his call holds for you, what rich
glories he has promised the saints will
inherit.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Glory be to you, O Christ, proclaimed to the
pagans;
glory be to you, O Christ, believed in by the
world.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL John 1:1-5,9-14

The longer form may be read: John 1:1-18
A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.

In the beginning was the Word:
the Word was with God
and the Word was God.
He was with God in the beginning.
Through him all things came to be,
not one thing had its being but through him.
All that came to be had life in him
and that life was the light of men,
a light that shines in the dark,
a light that darkness could not overpower.

The Word was the true light
that enlightens all men;
and he was coming into the world.
He was in the world
that had its being through him,
and the world did not know him.
He came to his own domain
and his own people did not accept him.

But to all who did accept him
he gave power to become children of God,
to all who believe in the name of him
who was born not out of human stock
or urge of the flesh
or will of man
but of God himself.

The Word was made flesh,
he lived among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory that is his as the only Son of the
Father,
full of grace and truth.
The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(all bow during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Sanctify, O Lord, the offerings we make
on the Nativity of your Only Begotten Son,
for by it you show us the way of truth
and promise the life of the heavenly Kingdom.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

To all who would accept him,
he gave the power to become children of God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord our God, we humbly ask you,
that, through the working of this mystery,
our offences may be cleansed
and our just desires fulfilled.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.