

December 25, 2010

SOLI DEO GLORIA  
Festival of the Nativity of our Lord

Good Shepherd, Novi

**JOHN 1:1-14**  
**GOD HAS BECOME LIKE ONE OF US.**

*In the name + of Jesus.*

In the Garden of Eden, the man and the woman rebelled against God by eating the forbidden fruit. They bound themselves to sin and death. They put themselves under God's curse. They forfeited the blessings of Paradise. God said, "**Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever**" – therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden.... (Genesis 3:22,23) Out of love for man, God refused to let him eat from the tree of life and live forever in a condition of sin, pain, grief, guilt, shame, and divine curse.

Man desired to be like God, who is Life and Light, who is full of grace and truth. But man's desire to be like God resulted in him being banished to death and darkness. Now he is full of selfishness and deceit. Man was driven from Paradise, and his situation has not improved. Every plea to be "good for goodness' sake" has not made anyone good. We are still sinners. We are still schemers and liars. We are still greedy and selfish. And we are still dying.

In the beginning, man tried to become like God. It was a colossal failure. It is, every time it's tried. Every time you defy God's word when following it makes life a little difficult, you are a rebel. Every time you trust in your own wisdom and strength because God's promises do not seem very sturdy, you are a fool. Every time you make God's word and sacraments merely an option instead of priority, you are an idolater. Like every man, you try to make yourself to be like God – doing whatever you please, however you please, whenever you please. But you will not succeed. It does not result in life and light, but in death and darkness. It is not a life of grace and truth; it is a life of selfishness and self-deceit. Repent.

Perhaps we cherish Christmas festivities so much not for what they are, but for what we wish they would be. We all have in our minds what a perfect holiday should look like. All the family is together. Everyone is cozy, safe, and warm. Everyone feasts on good things. Everyone receives nice gifts – what they want and what they need. And we are all grateful. No one is fighting. No one is sick. No one is lonely or sad or unhappy. That sounds nice, but have you ever had a Christmas measure up to that? I doubt it. Why? Because we are sinners living in a sinful world. We crave that picture perfect scene because we all want Paradise to be restored to us.

At Christmas, our Lord has accomplished that and more. Our Lord personally invested himself in reconciling the world to himself. **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:1,14)** When man tried to become like God, the result was disastrous. But now, God has become like one of us! The result is our salvation, our hope, and our joy.

**The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:14)** God has become like one of us. He who is omnipotent became helpless. He whom the heavens and the earth cannot contain was contained by the womb of the Virgin Mary, and then by a manger in

Bethlehem. **In Him was life, (John 1:4)** but now his life depended upon his mother's milk and Joseph's protection. **Without Him nothing was made that has been made, (John 1:3)** but now he is numbered among the creatures he has created. God has become like one of us.

Perhaps it is surprising that, when God sets foot into the world, he comes in such a humble manner. You would think that God would reveal himself in radiance and glory and power. But that is not the case in Bethlehem. Nor was it the case in Nazareth, or on Mt. Calvary. That's because God was not coming to impress us, but to redeem us. Jesus was seeing to it that man and God could dwell together again. And in Jesus, God and man do, indeed, dwell together as one. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He became like one of us so that he would redeem all of us.

Our Lord had to become flesh and blood in order to redeem us. After all, God's command is not that *God* should be holy. God is holy. He must be, or he would no longer be God. But God's command is that *man* be holy and joyfully obedient. Therefore, God became man to accomplish what is demanded of man.

Yes, dear Christian, your God has become like you. He knows your temptations because, like you, he has heard Satan's seductive whisper. He knows your pains because he himself was despised by men, abandoned by his friends, and betrayed by a companion. He was slandered and mocked, arrested and beaten, flogged and executed. Yes, God has become like one of us. He dwelt in this corrupt and painful world where the joys of Paradise have been rescinded because of sin. He is like you in every way – but without sin. The temptations did not keep him from holy obedience. The pains did not thwart a perfect trust. This man, born under Law, has joyfully obeyed the Law. This man, living under God's watchful eye, has pleased his Father. This man has won his place in God's kingdom.

God has become like one of us. Jesus is like us in every way, but without sin. But he came because of your sin. Yes, he knows your temptations and your pains because he endured them. He also knows your sins because he took them all into his body. He who is holy bore your curse. He who is immortal came to die for you. The Word became flesh so that he could suffer your judgment, your death, and your damnation for you. Jesus knows the wrath of God, not because he will be doling it out upon sinners, but because he has absorbed it for sinners. Through Jesus' holy life and innocent death, you have forgiveness for all of your sins. You have deliverance from death and hell. Divine peace has come to earth. God's good will rests on men.

**The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:14)** Jesus became body and blood to deliver himself into death for our sin. Jesus became body and blood to conquer the grave, showing us that we who are body and blood will rise to live just as he has. And the Word still comes to us to this day. Jesus' body and blood are here, given to us in the Lord's Supper for our salvation. Jesus does not come to us in a manger, but on the paten and in the chalice. But he comes for the same reason – to bring us salvation and to reconcile us to the God. In this way, the Word still dwells with us as we ingest his body and blood into our body and blood. God became like one of us, and now he unites himself to us so that we will become more like him.

God has become like one of us. Jesus came to dwell with men so that men could dwell with God. That is the joy of Christmas. Your Christmas joy comes only through Jesus' work of reconciliation. He truly gives you the Christmas joy you crave and dream

about. Paradise is restored to you. And what shall you see there? All of God's family is together. Everyone is cozy, safe, and warm. Everyone feasts on good things. Everyone receives nice gifts – what they want and what they need. And we are all grateful. No one is fighting. No one is sick. No one is lonely or sad or unhappy. Yes, dear Christian, you shall have all these things and more. Jesus came to win them for you. Jesus comes today to bestow them upon you. The Word became flesh. God has become like one of us. Divine peace has come to earth. God's good will rests on men.

**In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

## **PSALM – Choir: A Great and Mighty Wonder**

### **VERSE OF THE DAY**

#### **Gospel Procession**

**CW 59 Christ the Lord to Us Is Born (vv 1-3)**

**Gospel John 1:1-14**

**CW 59 Christ the Lord to Us Is Born (v 4)**

### **SERMON PRAYER**

## **Prayer for Christmas Day (Altar Book)**

#### **INTERCESSIONS**



**The 1<sup>st</sup> Reading****ISAIAH 9:2-7**

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined. You have multiplied the nation *and* increased its joy; they rejoice before You according to the joy of harvest, as *men* rejoice when they divide the spoil. For You have broken the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, and garments rolled in blood, will be used for burning *and* fuel of fire. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *His* government and peace *there will be* no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

**CHOIR**

A Great and Mighty Wonder

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading****TITUS 2:11-14**

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.

**Verse of the Day****HYMN 59****Christ the Lord to Us Is Born (vv 1-3)****Gospel Procession**

*During the Verse of the Day, there will be a procession to the middle of the nave. The gospel will be read in the middle of the nave, signifying that Christ is with us. The*

*congregation shall face the crucifix during the entire procession. We will sing the regular accolades before (i.e., "Glory be to you, O Lord") and after (i.e., "Praise be to you, O Christ") the gospel lesson.*

## **The Holy Gospel                      JOHN 1:1-14**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.