

December 25, 2022

### The Nativity of the Lord

On Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus and the coming of God into our earthly lives. In Christmas Day's Gospel, we once again find ourselves with baby Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in the manger. Each Christmas when confronted with this scene and, simultaneously, the mystery of the Incarnation, I find myself wondering anew how exactly to understand this God who became human. Who is it exactly who comes to us in Jesus?

When I was discerning conversion to Catholicism, Christ was explained to me as the part of God that so yearns for us that God entered into the world and becomes enfleshed to be in greater communion with us. And we are given further glimpses into the nature of Christ in the opening lines of John:

“In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.”

This verse with its cryptic clues as to the nature of Christ mystifies me as much as the Incarnation does. I cannot say that I have any firm grasp of what is meant by Christ as Word, but I can intimate some of the implications by reflecting on what words mean to me.

Words provide shape to experiences within us that, if it weren't for language, could remain unknown even to ourselves. It is through words that we reveal ourselves, and in so doing, we simultaneously give ourselves shape. The act of linguistic expression is an act of self-creation—the more we allow ourselves to speak freely, the more we come to not only know ourselves, but to *be* ourselves more fully. The more we are ourselves, the more fully we can bring ourselves into communion with others.

There is a paradoxical nature to a love so immense and overflowing that it limits itself to a finite body. This is the paradoxical love we celebrate on Christmas Day and are called to participate in *every* day. We are called to embrace the beautiful particularities of our own self-creation, and in so doing, to embrace the particularities of our unique relationships with God and with others. As Christ did when born as Jesus, we are called to participate in the transcendent by entering deeply into the individual.

*--Loren Barnes Gaillardetz*