

*The light shines in the darkness ...*

*and the Word became flesh, and lived among us*

*John 1: 5,7*

Robyn Sand

#### LIGHT IN DARKNESS

The Gospel of John, proclaimed on Christmas Day, speaks of Jesus, the Word of God becoming flesh as 'light' that 'shines in the darkness' and of its radiance coming into the world for all creation, not only for all humanity.

*Christmas signifies the taking up in unity with God not only human nature but, in a sense, everything that is flesh ...the Incarnation then has a cosmic significance, a cosmic dimension ... Even when the Eucharist is celebrated on the small table of a country church it is always celebrated on the altar of the world.*

*The Lord and Giver of Life Pope John Paul II n 50*

#### JESUS, THE WORD OF GOD LIVES AMONG US

Literally translated from John's Gospel, this means that Jesus 'pitched his tent' among us. In the many and, at times, conflicting feelings we experience at Christmas, God is with us in all that we experience.

#### CHRISTMAS 2021

Fr Andy Hamilton, writing recently in Eureka Street, has captured some of the uncertainties of this Christmas:

*Christmas is always a mixture of nostalgia, weariness, connection and hope. This year the strands that compose it are even more tangled. We hope to return to the pre-Covid normal of celebration without anxiety. We look forward to the New Year as a gate to freedom to travel, work and plan our lives without hindrance. At the same time, however, our plans are conditional. We realise that Covid has not left us, and that its mutations may lead to more interruptions and restrictions.*

In the midst of all this unpredictability, the hope and joy that accompanied the Incarnation of Jesus in Bethlehem waits to be born into each our lives in 2021. Fr Daniel O'Leary wrote that *Incarnation is about the way we see things, the way we get hints of the holy, hidden nature*

*of everything. He invites us to reflect on;*

*The utter surprise of feeling the invincible Spirit move in you, of sensing there is nothing you cannot be, or do. Think of the most liberating moments in your life - when, for instance, at the end of your worst night of loss, you still got up, drew back the curtains, and, without knowing why, your stalled heart began to beat with hope again.*

*Incarnation is about recognising divine beauty - usually in deep disguise. Can you think of a time when you saw into the heart of a gesture, a passing event, any sensation - really and truly saw into it, through the lens of Christmas?*

The Tablet 2011

Emmanuel, God with us, is always accessible within whatever is happening in our lives. Some years ago, Cardinal Avery Dulles wrote: *The Incarnation does not provide us with a ladder by which to escape the ambiguities of life and scale the heights of heaven. Rather, it enables us to burrow deep into the heart of planet Earth and find it shimmering with divinity.*

#### SEEING WITH NEW EYES

Christmas invites us to seek to see with new eyes, in the way the shepherds in Luke's Gospel set out to do ... *to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us (2:15).*

The Christmas celebration of the Incarnation of Jesus, the Word of God, also holds the mystery of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the cosmic Christ. When the shepherds found 'the child lying in the manger', an unknown writer says that they could not have imagined that the manger also held:

- ◆ Peace that calmed storms
- ◆ Bread and fish that fed 5000 people
- ◆ Healed eyes through which a blind man saw
- ◆ Living water given to the woman at the well
- ◆ Call to mission and discipleship
- ◆ Liberation given to the woman accused of adultery
- ◆ Beatitudes
- ◆ Lazarus' new life
- ◆ Forgiveness given from the Cross
- ◆ Open tomb of resurrection
- ◆ Companionship on life's journey
- ◆ Bread of life and cup of salvation....

What does the Incarnation of Jesus mean for you in whatever the circumstances of your life are this year?

## Christmas Time



Gari Melchers

Christmas Day is not the whole of Christmas Time. The full extent of this Time is experienced in the feasts of the Holy Family on 26 December, Mary the Mother of God on 1 January, the Epiphany on 2 January and the Baptism of Jesus on 9 January

The feast days of Christmas Time make the full meaning of Christmas clear. There can be no doubt about it: this Child is human, yes, but He is of heavenly as well as earthly origin. In this Child's light we all walk safely through the unknown. We are all here with the Magi, full of gifts to give on his behalf. What's more, with the opening of the heavens on the bank of the Jordan, we all have our first vision of life beyond life.

Christmas is larger than a baby in a manger. Christmas is the coming of a whole new world. More than that, it is what makes that world possible.

Sr Joan Chittister OSB *The Liturgical Year*

#### PRAYING CHRISTMAS TIME

<https://stbuenosoutreach.file.wordpress.com/2021-11/christmastide-2021-22>

The link will take you to St Bueno's Jesuit Spirituality Centre Outreach. They offer a way to pray throughout the day during Christmas Time, pondering both with the traditional Scriptural texts of Christmas Time and some words from the encyclical letter of Pope Francis: *Laudato si'* .