

Church of the Divine Love
1 CHRISTMAS
DECEMBER 31, 2023 10:15 AM
HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn **#100 – Joy to the world!**

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung) page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Isaiah 61:10 – 62:3**

Psalm 147

Second Lesson: **Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7**

Gradual Hymn **#101 – Away in a manger**

Gospel: **John 1:1-18**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze (printed on insert)

The Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form IV page 388

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn **#324 – Let all mortal flesh keep silence**

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer B	page 367
Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal)	page 367
Hymn during Consecration printed on insert	
The Lord's Prayer	page 364
The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer	page 337
The Communion of the People	
Communion Hymn #96 – Angels we have heard on high	
Post Communion Prayer	page 365
Prayer for Peace – on insert	
Prayer of St. Francis	page 833
Dismissal Hymn #Hark! the herald angels sing	
Dismissal	

Sermon Sunday December 31, 2023

Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 147; Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7; John 1: 1-18.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

How was your Christmas? It is a question I have asked and been asked over the last few days. While I understand what is being asked, I also hear an underlying assumption that Christmas is over. It is the same assumption that underlies the birthday wishes to Jesus. Happy birthday Jesus suggests that Christmas is the celebration of a past event, an anniversary. It is the reason why in at least a few homes the tree has already been taken down, the decorations packed away for another year, and the leftovers thrown out.

I raise these three points not as a criticism or judgment but diagnostically, in recognition that we are event driven people. We tend to live our lives from one event to the next. If you don't think so, take a look at your calendar. It is a schedule of events. Our days are full of events and if there is a day or two with no scheduled events then we say things like, nothing is going on that day, or I am not doing anything that day, as if there is no life, nothing to learn or discover, nothing to experience on those days.

How different is St. John's understanding of Christmas, life, and humanity. 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 came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

This, for St. John, is the Christmas story and it is set in the context of creation, "In the beginning." Creation is not an event of the past but the ongoing life of God with his people. St. John echoes and continues the Genesis story of creation, "In the beginning God said, 'Let there be...' and there was..." Land, sky, vegetation, living creatures from the water, birds of the air, living creatures from the earth, and humankind made in the image and likeness of God. Christmas is God continuing to give life to his people. And the Word became flesh and lived among us. Christmas, says St. Gregory of Nyssa, is the "festival of re-creation." It is God giving God's own life to his people. It is as if God said, I want humanity to see my face. I want them to hear my voice. I want them to touch me. I want them to smell my sweat. I want them to eat my body. I want to live their life. I want them to live my life. And the word became flesh and lived among us. This is God in the flesh, the divine human, holy humanity. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." God's Word, the eternal being, took on the fragile and limited form of a human being, dwelling intimately with us. This act of incarnation reveals God's profound love, grace, and the desire for personal connection with His creation.

In the person of Jesus Christ, we see the fullness of God's glory, characterized by truth and grace. Jesus, the firstborn of God's new creation, provides us with the ultimate revelation of God's character. He is the embodiment of truth, leading us to a deeper understanding of God's wisdom, purpose, and love. In that truth, we find the freedom to embrace a transformed life. This festival of re-creation is God's celebration of humanity. It is God entrusting God's self to human beings, to you and to me. It is God's reaffirmation of humanity's goodness. It is the sharing and exchanging of life between God and you and me. That's why the early church could say that God became human so that humanity might become God. The Son of God became the son of man so that the sons of men might become sons of God. Divinity was clothed in humanity so that humanity might be clothed in divinity.

How beautiful is that? Imagine what that means for us. It means we are holy and intended to be holy, not as an achievement on our own but as a gift of God. This is the gift of Christmas. We have been given the power to become children of God. This happens not by blood, or the will of the flesh, or the will of people, but by God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us. God sees humanity as the opportunity and the means to reveal himself. Yet far too often we use our humanity as an excuse. I'm only human, we declare, as if we are somehow deficient. We fail to see, to believe, to understand that in the Word becoming flesh and living among us we are God's first sacrament. Human beings are the tangible, outward, and visible signs and carriers of God's inward and spiritual presence. Have you ever thought of yourself as a sacrament? Have you ever looked at someone across the street and said, hey, look! There is the sacramental image of God? Why not? Why do we not see that in ourselves and each other? After all, The Word became flesh and lived among us.

In the Jewish tradition that rabbis tell a story that each person has a procession of angels going before them and crying out, "Make way for the image of God." Imagine how different our lives and world would be if we lived with this as our reality and the truth that guided our lives. Everywhere we go the angels go

with us announcing the coming of the image of God and reminding us of who we are. That is the truth of Christmas for us. It is also the Christmas truth for the person living next door, for those we love, for those we fear, for those who are like us and those who are different, for the stranger, and for our enemies. And the Word became flesh and lived among us.

The implications are profound. It changes how we see ourselves and one another, the way we live, our actions, and our words. It means that Christmas cannot be limited to an event. Christmas is a life to be lived, a way of being. It means that Christmas is more properly understood as a verb rather than a noun. So maybe we should stop asking, how was your Christmas? Instead, we should be asking, how are you 'Christ massing? Are you recognizing the Word become flesh in your own life? Are you recognizing the Word become flesh in the lives of others? Do you see the procession of angels and hear their voices? And the Word became flesh and lived among us. The Word became flesh and has never ceased living among us. The Word became flesh and will never cease living among us. So, make way. Wherever you go. Whatever you are doing. Whoever you are with. Make way for the image of God. Christmas your way through life.

As we conclude our message on John 1:1-18, we are reminded that Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, is the central figure of our faith. This passage dispels any doubts about His divinity, His purpose, and His desire to reconcile us to Himself. It challenges us to embrace Him with faith and live in the light He brings. Let us respond by acknowledging Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, as the source of life and truth, and by surrendering our lives to His gracious rule. May we continuously draw from the wisdom and grace found in Jesus, knowing that through Him, we are empowered to become children of God and experience the fullness of His glory. **Amen!**

1 CHRISTMAS	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also on zoom)
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	
MONDAY	8:30 PM	AA MEETING	
WEDNESDAY	7:00 PM	AL-ANON MEETING	
THURSDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP	
	8:30 PM	AA MEETING	

SAURDAY/THE EPIPHANY

10AM-2PM THRIFT SHOP

1 EPIPHANY/THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

10:15 AM HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II (also on zoom)

COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS

PARISH ANNUAL MEETING – SUNDAY, JANUARY 14TH

VESTRY NOMINATIONS

Warden – Erika Febres- First 2 year term

Vestry - Andrew Prosser – First 3 year term

Vestry - David Treasure – First 3 year term

	Today	Next Week
Eucharistic Minister	Jess Berbeck	Jess Berbeck
Coffee	Nolans	Janet Croft

SUPPORT THE FOOD PANTRY – DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Loving God, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Especially we remember before you:

Grace Schinella	Donna Edwards	Jess
Bob Curley	Beverly Noel	Art
Chris Dickson	Kate Jones	Deb P.
Michael Echevarria	John Rocco	Judy
Christopher	Warren	Kristen
Charlotte H.	Bernie Walther	Celeste
Mo	Phil Ryder	Carolyn
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Del
Robert Hosey	Lourdes S.	Aidan
Sally & Roger	Sophia	Carol K.
Mary & Family	Ciara	Jan
Nathan Treadwell	Gladys Hadija	Vincent
Jean Estinvil Quatorze	Jean Wildy	Nicolas
Matthew & Anne Marie Treasure	Michael & Family	

All people and countries suffering from violence, hatred and natural disasters.

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them.
Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen.

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,
Lay my life before you,
How I love you.

(Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus and third verse starting with Spirit).

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions and glory, now and for ever. Amen

