

Daily Reflections



GOD IN OUR MIDST

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Excerpts from Today's Readings

See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure, as he is pure.

1 JOHN 3:1-3

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.' I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel." John testified further, saying, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one

who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God."

JOHN 1:29-34

Reflection

In the season of Christmas, we celebrate the mystery and the miracle of the coming of Jesus into the world. Each of the Gospels chooses a different point of departure to capture the trajectory of his life history and its impact. The earliest of these narratives, Mark, begins with the announcement of John the Baptist, and the beginning of the ministry. The Evangelist does not draw attention to the unique nature of the intersection of God with humanity in the simple reality of a human life, preferring to focus on the unfolding of the Messianic promise of God. Matthew begins with a comprehensive genealogy of Jesus, linking him to the history of Israel from the time of Abraham to that of Joseph, some 42 generations. After a brief passage on Joseph's acceptance of Mary's condition, he turns to the coming of the Magi, their interaction with king Herod, the flight into Egypt, and the return to Nazareth. Matthew then turns to a history of Jesus' contact with John the Baptist and movement into the years of ministry. This gospel helps its Jewish audience recognize how Jesus manifests God's intentions through all the generations of their historical emergence. Luke's gospel begins with the narrative of the messianic promise, beginning with Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, the Annunciation of the angel to Mary, her Magnificat of surrender to God, the birth of Jesus, and his presentation in the Temple. Like Matthew, Luke grounds Jesus' life and ministry in the traditions of his ancestors, but has a more global sense of God's intentions for human salvation, as evidenced by the proclamation of Simeon at the Presentation as he praised God: **"My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."**

The Evangelists each focus a different lens on the coming of Jesus into the world, and into the spiritual geography of his ministry in history. However, John's Gospel extends the breadth of the mystery to embrace the very reality of God: **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."** John centers the miracle of Jesus' birth in the infinity of God, but grounded in the very domestic reality of human being: **"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."** All at once, the divine is realized in the human, the immortal in human mortality. This is the magical reality of the celebration of Christmas. The moment is as filled with innocent wonder as the eyes of the newborn, and as radiant as the infinity of time and space itself. We cannot define the reality of God as God. Our words are too small. But in the birth of Jesus, we acknowledge that God's hopes for creation far outstrip the margins of our desires or imagination.

The theological and spiritual center of this great revelation is captured with tender grace in the letters of John to the fledgling communities in Asia Minor. Here the foundation of his emphasis upon fidelity to the teaching given to the people is love—that received from God and that bestowed in human community by the faithful, one to another. These epistles remind all that “**God is love, and those who live in love live in God and God in them**” (1 John 4:16). This great benediction of God to all the world is our source of joy, and our gift of constant wonder. This is our Christmas. This is our day of salvific hope.



For Pondering

- What does it mean to you to say/hear that God is love?
- How do you embrace the love of God in your own walk of faith and life in the world?
- How would you express your sense of God's love to others in your life?

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