

Commentary on the Gospel: In the Beginning was the Word

Commentary for the second Sunday after Christmas (Cycle A,B,C) and commentary.

Gospel (Jn 1:1-18)

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 was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines

in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.

The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; 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, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

(John bore witness to him, and cried, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.’”) And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

Commentary

During this Christmas season we are meditating with joy on the colorful stories which the Gospels provide us about the birth of Jesus. But we are also presented with texts such as today's, which invite us to rise above the anecdotal and picturesque details to contemplate what the mystery of the birth of Jesus Christ implies and

to better understand its meaning and consequences for our lives. We have before us a wonderful text, in which the foundations of our faith are harmoniously synthesized.

"In the beginning was the Word": the Word is not a creature, but rather is someone who has existed from all eternity. "And the Word was with God (*ho Theós*)."¹ The Word is a person distinct from the one whom the Greek text calls *ho Theós*, using the article *ho*. Therefore *ho Theós* refers to the Father, the origin of everything. But the Word, distinct from the Father, also from the beginning "was God" (v. 1), sharing his very nature. The Gospel text thus introduces us to the intimacy of the Trinity: a single divine nature, in which there is a distinction of persons. Here we are told of the one from whom everything proceeds (*ho Theós*), and of the Word.

The Gospel text continues, echoing the Book of Genesis and its account of the creation of the world in seven days. What was stated in Genesis is now made explicit in a simple but very profound way. In the Genesis account each of the days begins as follows: "God said... (let there be light, let there be firmament, let the earth put forth vegetation, etc.)," and what God says is immediately done: "And it was so." That is to say, God creates everything that exists by articulating his Word, through his Word. That is why it is now indicated that "all things were made through him (through the Word), and without him was not anything made that was made" (v.3).

And now comes the most magnificent thing God wills to do in the fullness of time, the surprising and unprecedented novelty: "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (v. 14). The divine person who is

the Word assumed a human nature, so that, without ceasing to be God, he became man, like us. He became incarnate in a concrete and tangible person: Jesus. The words of John's Gospel have all the force of the eyewitness: "we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (v. 14).

"These are not the learned words of a rabbi or doctor of law," Benedict XVI points out, "but rather the passionate witness of a humble fisherman. Attracted in his youth by Jesus of Nazareth, in the three years he spent living with him and with the other Apostles, John experienced his love, to the extent that he called himself "the disciple Jesus loved" saw him die on the Cross and appear Risen, and then with the others received his Spirit. From his heart's meditation on the whole of this experience, John drew a deep conviction: Jesus is the

Wisdom of God incarnate, he is his eternal Word who became a mortal man" [1].

All this shows us, as St. Josemaría points out, that "the God of our faith is not a distant being who contemplates indifferently the fate of men — their desires, their struggles, their sufferings. He is a Father who loves his children so much that he sends the Word, the Second Person of the most Blessed Trinity, so that by taking on the nature of man he may die to redeem us [2].

At every moment of his life, even as a child in the manger in Bethlehem, Jesus makes known to us the goodness, wisdom, mercy, tenderness and greatness of God. "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he himself has made him known" (v. 18).

[1] Benedict XVI, Angelus, January 4, 2009.

[2] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, 84.

Francisco Varo

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