



Homily for Christmas Day

25 December 2017

St. David's Cathedral, Cardiff

Archbishop George Stack

“In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word was made Flesh”

One of the deepest and most profound things one person can say to another is “I give you my word”. It can mean “You can trust me. I won’t let you down”. Or sometimes “If you want to trust me with some inner truth about yourself, you may share it and my love and respect for you will not be diminished”. “I give you my word” means that we give something of ourselves, something that comes from my heart which must be consistent with my life, my relationship, my respect for you.

The story of Christmas is, of course, about how God communicates with us. He gives us his word, that is, the perfect expression of himself in human language, backed up by a human life which paid the price of love for humanity in his death on the cross. This is what St. John means when he writes *“The Word was made Flesh”* (Jn 1:14).

In the 4th century, St. Augustine said about these words *“The Word is, in a way, the art of the almighty and wise God”*. The Word- Jesus Christ- is God’s supreme work of art.

Any work of art is a way of speaking – or making music. It is an attempt to find images that will tell us something true, something of lasting value, something beyond the mundane. It starts with what is invisible – an idea, a thought, a way of seeing that other people cannot see. So, it is with a painting, or a Michelangelo statue which he sees in his mind’s eye. It is when he chisels away at the marble, the complete perfection of a human being is revealed. The invisible is made visible before our eyes. It has always been there. Only now it is revealed.

If a human artist feels compelled to communicate what lies within him or herself, how much more does God wish to reveal something about himself to human beings? We believe that in the birth of Jesus, we have the inmost nature of God revealed not only in power but in love. We can all understand and respond to a wordless, newborn child and in the man that child became.

The gospels tell the story of the man he became and how that was achieved – through life to the point of death and beyond. The New Testament writers explain that these words tell us everything we need to know about him – but also everything we need to know about ourselves. It is no accident that at Christmas we try to recapture the fundamental attitude of goodness and generosity and forgiveness. This is calling us back to who we ought to be. Jesus, God’s Word made Flesh, is the man for others.

In all the complexities of life, God in Jesus says to us:

“Trust me. I give you my word that I am on your side. Even when things are at their darkest, I am the God who is with you, in your joys, in your afflictions and eventually in your dying. For I have been there before you and behind you in my Word that was once made flesh”.

That is why today we sing:

O Come let us adore him

O come let us adore him.

O come let us adore him.

Christ the Lord.