

**The Nativity of Our Lord, December 25, 2020**

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## **The Great Surprise and Wondrous Mystery of the Word Among Us**

John 1:1–14

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Eph 1:2*

From our Christmas Gospel: **“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”** (Jn 1:14).

It’s no surprise to find God “in the beginning,” as we do in the first chapter of Genesis. After all, he’s uncreated, infinite, and eternal. He always has been and he always will be. He is without beginning or end. If it were any other way, then he wouldn’t be God. Everything else, everything that is not God, whether visible or invisible, is part of his creation. For Moses says, **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”** (Gen 1:1). He made it out of nothing, spoke all creation into being by his word: **“God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light”** (Gen 1:3).

### 1.

Like Genesis, the Gospel of John starts before creation with the words “in the beginning” but offers this twist: **“In the beginning was the Word”** (Jn 1:1). Prior to the creation, when there was nothing besides God, there was God’s Word. St. John puts it like this: **“The Word was with God”** (Jn 1:1). The Word and God are here described as two distinct persons. Personal pronouns, such as “he” and “him” and “his,” must be used for the Word. He’s a divine person. We therefore confess with John: **“The Word was God”** (Jn 1:2), uncreated, infinite, eternal God.

Through this Word, there in the beginning with God, **“all things were made”** (Jn 1:3). He was the agent by whom God spoke the entire creation into being, **“like a master workman,”** as it says in Proverbs (Prov 8:30). Light and life have their beginning and source in him. The Word was there when the sun came into being . . . and snow and pine trees and reindeer and Adam too. He was there **“rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man”** (Prov 8:31). And it was very good—all that he’d made (Gen 1:31).

### 2.

Fly through time, however, from “the beginning” to this moment, and what you find is far different. There’s darkness, thick darkness and deep gloom, over the whole world. The world in which we live doesn’t know God. It’s spiritually ignorant and blind. It cannot recognize its maker, even though his imprint is still evident in the beauty and complexity and order of creation. With a single word—“**darkness**” (Jn 1:5)—St. John describes creation’s fall, sin, death, and hell. The word “darkness” captures the confusion and misunderstanding and futility around us and even in us. “Darkness” means that man can’t find God, no matter how many times he bumps into the stuff God made. He’s lost, disoriented, alienated, constantly inventing false gods and false worship to fill the void and the emptiness, serving the creation rather than the creator.

## 3.

If the creation were to be redeemed, saved, rescued from this darkness of sin and death, then God would have to make himself known, point himself out, reveal himself to us. But how would he do this? God would come to the place where we are, descend to earth, enter his creation, so that we lost and condemned creatures might know him and have communion with him.

This is the great surprise and wondrous mystery of Christmas. God shows up in a place where we certainly don’t expect to find him: “**The Word became flesh and dwelt among us**” (Jn 1:14). God the Word, who was in there in the beginning and participated in the creation of all things, took on a human nature like yours. The Uncreated became a creature; the Infinite, limited and bound; the Eternal, subject to time. The Word became flesh, Jesus Christ, true God and true man in one person.

WHAT A SURPRISE—BECAUSE MAN CAN NO LONGER FIND THE CREATOR,  
THE CREATOR BECAME MAN!

The glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. He is the light of the world, the light that shines in our darkness, the light no darkness can overcome.

So do you recognize your maker now, dear Christian? O creature, do you know your creator? Do you see your salvation, O sinner?

## 4.

The one who formed man from the dust has come with fingernails and eyebrows and knee caps to reclaim his creation. He was born of a woman, Mary his mother, wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger for a bed. He was before Abraham, even before Adam, and yet he can be found in Bethlehem as a babe. O come, let us adore Him.

The one who made the forests and the mountains has come also with arms outstretched upon a wooden cross. There the creator of heaven and earth suffered and bled and died for his creation. The one in whom “**we live and move and have our being**” (Acts 17:28) was wrapped in linen and laid in a tomb, then to burst forth on the third day as the first bloom of a new creation. O come, let us adore Him.

The One who made the wheat and the vine comes now in bread and wine to you. His true body and blood are present on this altar. Eternal life, the light of the world—it’s so near to you that you can touch it and taste it. God is given into your mouth, makes himself known to you with forgiveness, life, and salvation. Fall on your knees. Hear the angel’s voices. Join in their song: “Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory” (LSB 195). O come, let us adore Him.

For God the Word who was in the beginning is now and forever incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. Christmas is a blessed surprise: the uncreated, eternal, and infinite God comes right here among us as our light and our life.

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The peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

*Phil 4:7*

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