

CHRISTmass Eve 2008 (*The Birth of the Blessed One – 1*)

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

Dear Christian Friends: We have heard read the Holy Scriptures for this evening. Let us now mark and inwardly digest this sacred story of the loving purpose of God from the first days of our disobedience until the glorious redemption brought us by this holy Child Whose Birth we celebrate tonight.

We heard first of what happened immediately after the fall of mankind into sin – and do not doubt that the same curse has come upon all mankind. From the moment of our conception we are all plagued with a sinful, rebellious flesh – we are just as disobedient as Adam and Eve in our own ways ... and no less condemned because of our transgressions and sins. Our women have sorrowful pain in childbirth ... our faces and brows sweat to earn a living ... our ground grows thorns and thistles – we are sinners, just as they ... disobedient, just as they ... doomed to return unto the ground, just as they.

But with that first – and doleful – transgression came also the first – and joyful – Gospel-promise of the One Who would come to take away the punishment. ***He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.*** [GEN 3.15] It is the Birth of **that** Seed of a woman that we celebrate this evening. And mark carefully just how your God has worded that Gospelpromise. The LORD God speaks only of the woman when He says to the serpent (satan): ***I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed.*** The Gospel-promise is of the One Who will be born only of a woman – He will have no earthly, biological father ... which is to say: He will be born of a virgin.

And so it is that in the fullness of time, the Almighty and Eternal Son of the Living God is conceived and born of the Blessed Virgin Mary – apart from human, fatherly heritage. The Christ – the promised Seed – is conceived by the Word and the Holy Spirit of God, in accordance with and in fulfillment of the Scriptures of the Prophets. And this happens so that He might be God with us – Immanuel ... as Isaiah prophesied [ISA 7.14] ... and as the angel told Joseph in the dream [MAT 1.23]. This Savior Who is Christ the Lord is the one true God in human Flesh – dwelling (tabernacle-ing) among us ... with the express purpose of saving us from sin, death, devil, and hell. That is what the Name He was to be given indicates – JESUS means *YAHWEH Saves* ... as the angel also told Joseph in the dream: ***thou shalt call His Name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins.*** Yes, this miraculous Son ... born of the Virgin ... came to dwell among us precisely so that He might give us His Life – and save

**all** people ... **you and me** ... from our sins.

One (important) question answered by our Holy Gospel readings this evening is *How?* *How* is Christ with us? And *how* does He save us? The answer is: by His Word ... and with His Word. With God it has always been *by and with His Word*. From the very beginning, God does and accomplishes everything by and with His Word. At the Creation, He speaks His Word, *Let there be!* – and it was. So likewise after the fall into sin (as we have heard), God lifted up Adam and Eve with His Word of Promise: His Word of the Gospel – that the Seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head ... that the Savior would win the ultimate, once-for-all victory over the devil.

And throughout the Old Testament, that Gospel-Word of Promise was repeated ... gradually becoming clearer and more focused – to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (as we've been hearing these past Wednesday evenings) ... to Judah ... to Moses and the Prophets ... to King David. Then, at last, that Word came to Mary and to Joseph (*of the house and lineage of David*); and with that Word, came the Son of God into Flesh – He Who is, Himself, the eternal Word of the Father. So you see, God is – must be – ever faithful to His Word, because 'It' – the Word – is the very utterance and revelation of God Himself. In the same way God is ever faithful in all His Words and promises to you – in the washing away of sins in Holy Baptism ... in the pronouncement that your sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake (as you hear this very moment) ... and in the Holy Supper that the Lord has given *for the forgiveness of sins*.

This Word of God, then, is far more than information only; it is the very power and presence of the Holy Triune God – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ... spoken in the Person of the Son, Who is now and forever in your human Flesh. The very Word of God has become Flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ – a living, breathing, walking, teaching, acting, doing ... even dieing and rising Word – conceived and born of Mary! Incredible!

And now in a similar – but different and derived – sense ... by the same divine grace and mercy of God that overshadowed that humble handmaid of the Lord, Mary ... Christ is conceived and born in you. And He in turn gives birth to faith in you – by the means of His Word ... the speaking of Himself to you ... which is alive with His Holy Spirit (the Power of the Most High)! So in this derived sense you receive Christ, as did Mary ... and you are granted to fear, love and trust in Him, as did St. Joseph – with a God-given and Godly faith ... faith that is like God Himself: patient & long-suffering!

For by and with His Word, He gives Himself to you ... along with His life and salvation; so that He lives and abides in you ... and you live and abide in Him – by faith that is according to His Word.

Apart from His Word, you would remain in your sin – and there would be nothing for you but condemnation and the dust of death. But by and with His Word – which is proclaimed to you this night and throughout the year – by and with this Word (made Flesh) you have the free and full forgiveness of all your sins ... and the life everlasting in Him. That is what it means when the angels declare: ***Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people*** – that is, which shall be to **you** this night – ***For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord!*** May this glory of the most high God – His peace and good will – be with you always!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. [Amen]