

Nativity of our Lord 2024  
John 1:1-18 (ESV)

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen His glory; glory as of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A most blessed feast of the Nativity of our Lord to all of you on this glorious Christmas Day, dear ones—truly, what a joyous day, a magnificent day certainly for us to come together with friends and family, giving and receiving gifts—and most especially, of course, because today we celebrate and marvel at the mystery of our Lord’s Incarnation and holy birth, God the Father giving us the greatest gift of all in His only-begotten Son, Who came down from heaven and came close to us, even taking on human flesh, and Who dwelt among us to save us.

Let each and every one of us revel in the glory of this great mystery today, dear ones. Because the glory of the Lord now revealed in the fulness of time, in the infant Christ—tender and mild—has certainly not always been experienced in the same way from the days of old.

In fact, as you may remember, when the glory of the Lord was revealed at Mount Sinai, long ago, *that* was a fearful, frightening revelation of His glory. *That* had filled all God’s people with sheer terror and trembling as His presence was manifestly revealed way up high on the mountaintop.

There were thunders and lightnings and a great cloud covering the mountain. It was wrapped in thick smoke because the Lord Himself had descended on it in fire, and the whole mountain trembled greatly, the Scriptures say.

Moses was then commanded by the Lord to set limits around the mountain and consecrate it, keeping the people at a distance and prohibiting them from even touching it. And with the glory of the most holy Lord revealed in such a terrifying way, it had to be so, at least initially, because of the people’s sinful condition.

As fallen, sinful human beings, they *had* to remain at a distance lest they perish, being utterly consumed in the presence of His glory like a heap of dry leaves in a raging fire. In and of themselves, the people had no way whatsoever to rid themselves of the uncleanness and defilement of their sin and to draw near to the Lord in all His divine holiness and purity.

And *unless He somehow made a way* for sinners to be anywhere near Him, the people would ultimately remain separated and cut off from life and every blessing with Him.

And thus, you can see the great drama unfold and take form: This separation between God and man, between our most holy Lord and defiled sinners, was not just a dilemma faced once upon a time by the ancient Israelites, and by them alone.

No, this was the dilemma faced by all mankind since the Fall into sin by our ancient ancestors, Adam and Eve: Unless the Lord should make a way for us to be near Him, how could

you, or I, or any human being defiled with sin dwell with Him and stand in the presence of His awesome glory as we were always intended to from the beginning?

With man, this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible. And although no man could see any way for us to dwell in intimate union with the Lord, Who made us, our blessed Lord has *made* a way now, in the fulness of time, by becoming man and saving us from our sins.

And this great mystery has long been unfolding, prefigured in types and shadows from ages past.

When Moses encountered the burning bush, for example, the bush was indeed ablaze with fire, and yet it was not consumed, and more than that, the Lord Himself was revealed to Moses, in a very special way, in the great mystery that was manifest before him.

So too, from Mt. Sinai, the Lord commanded Moses to construct the *tabernacle*, the tent of meeting, where the Lord Himself would reveal His glory and meet His people, dwelling among them intimately. His divine presence was truly manifest there among His people in the tabernacle, as it was on the mountain, and yet the tent was not consumed by the fire of His glory, nor were His people as He dwelt among them, blessing them through the priests, cleansing them of their sins through sacrifice, and removing their guilt from them as far the east is from the west.

But finally it has pleased our Lord most, not to reveal His glory by dwelling with man in a tent or a temple made with hands. No, in the fulness of time, the eternal Son and Word of the Father became flesh and tabernacled among us as one of us—true God and true man.

Within the womb of the Virgin Mary, God's own Son assumed our nature and united it with His divine nature in the unity of His person. And now the glory of the Lord has been manifestly revealed in the flesh of Jesus Christ, and yet His flesh, our flesh, has not been consumed or destroyed, but renewed and restored and redeemed. And for all of us united with Him by grace through faith, we are and will be renewed and restored and redeemed.

Dear ones, draw near and behold the precious face of the infant Christ and see the salvation of God enfleshed.

Look on Him and see and know that by His Incarnation, He takes all that is ours so that we would have all that is His as we dwell with Him in intimate communion.

He takes our sin and gives us His righteousness.

He takes our wretchedness and gives us His blessedness.

He takes our defilement and uncleanness and gives us His purity and holiness, even laying down His life for us on the cross to save us from eternal death.

This very Lord, our Incarnate Savior, has been pleased to dwell among us, and He's been pleased as well to welcome both of you, Travis and Cameron, among His people in this place, with whom He lives in intimate communion. Rejoice and be glad today, that you've been numbered among the redeemed in Christ.

You probably thought catechesis would never end. That's certainly how it feels at times, and in truth this day has been a long time in coming. But think of how long the Lord's plan of salvation for the human race has been unfolding, and how He's now made you participants in it. And for the rest of your lives, as faithful disciples of Christ, know that the gifts He gives you will never wear out or fade.

They are yours today. You are His today. And with Him, we shall dwell in intimate communion together as one.

To Christ be all the glory forever and ever. Amen.