

## SECOND SUNDAY after CHRISTMAS (2021)

### A) THE "BBC 2" VERSION OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY

- Someone once described today's readings as the "BBC 2" version of the Christmas story.
- Those readings may seem very highbrow and abstract, compared with the Gospel stories we have been hearing lately.
- When we are told about the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, the manger, the shepherds, the wise men, and so on, we can easily imagine these things taking place and identify with them.
- But today's readings are not like that.
- And yet they are really telling the Christmas story from another angle, from God's point of view.
- It might help if we remember that the story is really a love-story, the story of God's love for us, and his efforts to tell us about that love.

### B) HOW A FRIENDSHIP GROWS

- Think of a special love or friendship that you have had, and of how that friendship began and developed.
- it is quite likely that you very gradually built up a relationship of trust
- as each day and each week went by, you felt able to reveal more of yourself to the other person, and he or she also felt able to share a little more of themselves with you.
- At first it would be just your name, your home, the work you do;
- later on, the family you belong to, the hobbies and interests you have;
- and then when you felt you really could trust the other person, you would be able to share deep thoughts and feelings, things that were very important and precious to you.

### C) GOD GRADUALLY REVEALS HIMSELF TO US (1) IN CREATION

- In a way, that is what God has done with us.
- To begin with, he revealed himself to us in creation, so that people could look at the world about them;
- they could even look into themselves as part of that creation;
- and, by observing the order and beauty and majesty and goodness of creation, catch a glimpse of those qualities in God the Creator.
- So, in the First Reading, the Wisdom of God, speaking as a person, tells how she CAME FORTH FROM THE MOUTH OF THE MOST HIGH AND COVERED THE EARTH LIKE A MIST:
- the wisdom of God revealing itself in created things.

### D) GOD REVEALS HIMSELF TO A SINGLE NATION

- But that was only the first stage.
- Wisdom then goes on to say that she was told TO PITCH HER TENT IN JACOB AND MAKE ISRAEL HER INHERITANCE.

- In other words, God wanted to reveal himself in a special way to the Jewish people, to speak to them in a way he had spoken to no other nation.
- God's wisdom was to dwell in a unique way with the Jews, because they would be given commandments and laws which would guide them and help them to live well and happily.
- These laws were not primarily restrictions on their freedom but, rather, ways in which God revealed to them the kind of God he was:
  - the life-giver, the provider, the builder of community, and so on.

#### E) GOD REVEALS HIMSELF ON HIS ONLY SON

- But this revelation of God to his people was only a foreshadowing of the greatest revelation of all:
  - God would not merely speak to his people, but the word itself would take on human flesh.
  - God himself would live and work and walk and talk among his people, and be seen as one of them.
  - This is what today's Gospel is saying to us:
    - that God has revealed himself to us, not all at once, but gradually, step-by-step
    - so, the word of God, the wisdom of God, was with God from the beginning;
      - he revealed himself first in creation: THROUGH HIM ALL THINGS CAME TO BE.
      - That word was spoken to the people of the Old Testament to enlighten them: THE WORD WAS THE TRUE LIGHT THAT ENLIGHTENS ALL MEN.
      - But now, in Jesus Christ, THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH AND HE LIVED AMONG US.

#### F) JESUS REVEALS THE FATHER TO US

- He lived among us first of all to show us what God the Father is like:
  - NO-ONE HAS EVER SEEN GOD; IT IS THE ONLY SON WHO IS NEAREST TO THE FATHER'S HEART WHO HAS MADE HIM KNOWN.
  - More than anything else, he has revealed that God is a tender, compassionate and merciful Father, who wants to embrace us as his own children, even after we have gone astray.
  - And that is what the Second Reading is telling us:
    - BEFORE THE WORLD WAS MADE, before the beginning of time, HE CHOSE US, chose each one of us here, TO BE HOLY AND SPOTLESS, AND TO LIVE THROUGH LOVE IN HIS PRESENCE, DETERMINING THAT WE SHOULD BECOME HIS ADOPTED SONS AND DAUGHTERS.
    - He is the lover who wants to be at one with the beloved.
    - He loves and values each one of us so much that he wants us to be like him and to be with him.
    - The Gospel tells us that TO ALL WHO DID ACCEPT HIM HE GAVE POWER TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD.
    - Whoever we are, whatever we have done or failed to do, we still have THE POWER TO BECOME, the power to change and to grow,
      - knowing that we are sustained and helped by one whose love for us is unlimited, unchanging and unconditional.
      - MAY WE COME TO SHARE THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST WHO HUMBLED HIMSELF TO SHARE IN OUR HUMANITY.