

Of the Father's Love Begotten

As the Letter to the Hebrews puts it:

At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son.

This simple sentence expresses for us the core of what we believe about Christmas. In the birth of this child, the fulness of God's revealing love has been made flesh. Whatever we feel or believe about the events which describe this moment, the truth which they contain cannot be denied; God became human and lived out our life. The immensity of such a statement sometimes confuses us, sometimes baffles us and often leaves us perplexed and wondering why. The answer lies in the gift which is given to us and which comes to us as a baby.

Nowadays many people find such talk impossible to believe. Religion it is said has got such a bad press that it has lost any chance it once had of speaking meaningfully to people about purpose or significance, or about the important events that happen in their lives. So religion gets all the blame for the rotten things that happen, and is then marginalized so that it no longer features when celebrating the good things. Such an understanding is of course a distortion of what as Christians we proclaim: that the love of God is made present to us through his son Jesus Christ.

In entering the human condition God enters every life, and thus meaning, purpose and significance are all bound up in God, and for each person their life becomes and is a movement in reaching out in response to this. In the nature of our own partial humanity, Jesus shows us how to make our response, and that is where the truth of our belief makes its impact. In his birth, life, death and resurrection, or if you like in the incarnation, the impartial total love of God is made manifest in Jesus, and encloses itself around the human condition. His humanity is the image of the Father's love begotten, and it begins as it has to with conception and birth. So in the Gospels, Luke and Matthew fashion their narratives to relate this love through the actions and deeds of Mary and Joseph and all the other familiar characters and events which have become so dear to us. John on the other hand, provides the cosmic backdrop which sets the mystery within the realm of the eternal. What is being explored is neither untouchable nor inaccessible because what is being explored and made manifest is the reality of God's love in the human person and his place in the cosmos.

So this gift comes to us in the most natural of ways, as a tender baby that longs to be loved. Each one of us is asked to come and begin the journey of exploration, to see in the essence of this child a love that will take its presence in to every dimension that our humanity is capable of, and still offer that love notwithstanding. It is a love which teaches and schools us, a love which directs and guides us. It is a love which abides. The Christmas story is one which relates the truth of what this love means. The Christmas story is a precursor of all that is to happen and take place, but it takes centre stage today. Let us make its impact felt in our lives and in the lives of those around us, let us hold fast to our belief that what has been given to us is a pathway to understanding and reconciliation, a pathway to love. In Jesus Christ, true God and true man, we have received the Word made flesh.

Hodie Christus natus est.