

Christmas Day 2020 Reflections
By Sister Patricia Crowley, OSB
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Isaiah 52: 7-10; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18

I.

We, as a community, are blessed to be able to gather together in Eucharist on this Christmas morning during this Covid pandemic. Thank you, Mike, for coming to celebrate with us again this morning!

The Scriptures today speak to us:

- First in the remarkable imagery of Isaiah's proclamation that the news of this event has spread to all the ends of the earth;
- Then, in Psalms 98 in response, which urges us to “Sing to God a new song”;
- and, in the letter to the Hebrews, the author says that God spoke in partial and varied ways in the past.....in Jesus the Christ God speaks not partially but fully;
-and, in the beginning of the Gospel according to John we hear in the beginning - was the Word, *it was with God and it was God*;
- Finally, there was “A man named John” who understood the Word that was spoken and urged all human beings to accept that Word.

In all of this, three people emerge:

- the Word,
- John who proclaims the Word, and
- each of us who are invited to accept that Word in our hearts and in our lives.

II. The Word.....

In our culture, it's often only the signed contract that mattersbut in the biblical cultures (oral cultures) the spoken word had power.

Words are important in every day life.

Words are said to render things intelligible.....

We regard people favorably if they keep their word.

At times we hear ourselves or someone saying - "I just cannot find or think of the 'word' to express what I mean."

Remember that scene in the life of Helen Keller when she all of a sudden got the connection between the sounds her faithful teacher, Annie Sullivan, was making and the concept of water – in that moment, she discovered her first "word".

The invitation of this gospel reading is to make the connection between the words we hear in our Scriptures or in our liturgies and the reality of our own lives and in our own experience of our world.

The Word was made flesh. We are the Body of Christ today! We are that Word to our world!!!

III. John as *Shoshben*

Recently, Cardinal Cupich, spoke about John the Baptist as a "shoshben". That Semitic word, he said, actually means friend of the bridegroom, a role in that tradition which is a cross between the wedding planner and the best man of our day. No wonder John liked the desert life!!!!

The shoshben has a variety of responsibilities. Among these are:

- making the wedding go smoothly and does not give much thought to his own needs.
- Arranging for the invitations. He brings people together and makes sure they are connecting with one another.
- Securing gifts from others for the couple so that they will have everything they need as they begin their new life together. In this function he tries to bring out the best (gifts) in others.

That is what John is doing as he testifies to the Word - "no one has ever seen God. The only Son of God,has revealed God to us.

IV. We who accept what John says about the Word.....

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

in a moment of time. Since then, that Word has evolved and it is evolving in our world. In each of the 7.8 billion human beings on our planet today and in our vast universe. The Christ is born anew and through the life of each one. The divine milieu is changing and evolving.

We are the flesh of the Word who became flesh. Our lives can and do proclaim that one and only *Word*.

We do so in the spirit of St. Francis who said: *“Preach the Word of God wherever you go, even use words if necessary.”*

In the reality of the mystical body of Christ and in the unfolding of the cosmic Christ, the Word of God evolves.

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God.....the Word is God. God is Love.

Christmas proclaims the Word. In each of us and in our world, that Word is evolving and it is alive. May each of us speak that *WORD* this day and every day!

V. Conclusion

What we heard today and the fact that we are here in this place celebrating Eucharist together, points to so much more than an event thousands of years ago.

Something new has happened AND IS happening. May we recognize that in each one we meet, the Word of God dwells. That is what we celebrate in this great Feast! That is the Word that has been spoken in our lives, in our world.

May this be a blessed and a holy Christmas for each of us and for our world!