

**Christmas Day – Year C – December 25, 2009**  
**Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-12; John 1:1-14**  
**Susan E. Wilmot**

The hit single, “I want it all” written and performed by the rock band Queen was released in 1989. Perhaps especially appropriate for this Christmas Day, the album is called *The Miracle*. The third verse begins with these words, “I’m a man with a one track mind / So much to do in one life time / (Do you hear me people?) / Not a man for compromise and where’s and why’s and living lies / So I’m living it all... / And I’m giving it all.” The chorus then sings loud and proud, “I want it all, I want it all, and I want it now.” Does it sound like anyone we know? Well, at least for me, it sounds a lot like Jesus, who is certainly of one mind with God; lives his life to the fullest with grace and compassion in service; never compromises His integrity; lives a sinless life without lies or deceit; and gives His all, dying on a traitor’s cross for the life of the world. On the other hand, this picture doesn’t look much like a Christmas card scene with a glowing Madonna gazing serenely at the sleeping baby Jesus lying in a pristine manger. We cannot forget that the reality for this mother and child was probably considerably different. More like a dark, cold, and dirty cave with a cloak or two strewn on the floor for warmth and bedding. Still, “He who chooses the beginning of the road, chooses the place it leads to. It is the means that determines the end,” says Harry Emerson Fosdick. The means of God’s divine intervention in time and space for the redemption of the whole world was no accident, and even though the future would bring great pain, it is a future path chosen by God before the beginning of time.

In the beautiful hymn that forms the prologue to the Gospel of John we read, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Later we find out that the Word is Jesus, our Lord and Savior, but for now, we have to dwell with the mystery of the divine Word for a while. The deceptive little phrase “the Word was with God” is a good translation, but does not fully capture the essence of what John intends for us to know about this *logos*, and what his Greek-speaking listeners would have heard. In fact, it is a four-fold revelation of the mystery of the divine Godhead. God the Son is sent by God the Father. He exists before and outside of all time, and is therefore fully divine. When the *logos* is with God, it is more than just a physical proximity, as in something like, “John was with me all day.” It also expresses a way of being oriented in one’s will, like when we really support someone, we say things like, “I’m with you all the way.” Finally, it is a way of describing the relationship between God the Father and God the Son, as being one where they always see eye-to-eye, fully reconciled with one another in perfect understanding and union; an ever-fluid harmony of love, singleness of desire, and obedience of will.

God’s descent into flesh is a shocking revelation by any standards, and especially so for that period in our history. The prevailing philosophy of that day was dualistic: light being good, and darkness evil and so on. In that philosophical scheme, the material world was considered something rotten to be endured, and something to be escaped from in order to obtain the purity and perfection of the spiritual realm. Bodily flesh was distained and considered to be of no value in this type of thinking. So imagine the

surprise, when John the Baptist appears as a witness to testify to the Light and Life of Jesus Christ: God's divine perfection brought to birth in human form. No wonder there were many who could not accept that Jesus is fully divine as well as fully human. It was entirely inconceivable to the intelligentsia that God would ever take on despised flesh. "He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him."

Does the fact that some may never come to accept Jesus as God incarnate diminish the truth of the Word as Light and Life of the world? Not at all. Jesus' mission remains the same: to redeem God's creation, and reconcile all people to God. The early church father, Athanasius understood the incarnation in this way: that Jesus became man so that we might be sanctified or made holy, by virtue of Christ. God loves us so much that he took on human flesh as the incarnate Word to communicate that message to us personally. If that is not enough to make clear that God desires an intimate relationship with each of us, then the Gospel tells us even more. It is God's gift of faith to all who receive Him, and believe in the name of Jesus that empowers each of us to become children of God. To *receive* Jesus may seem a strange choice of word. Looking more closely at the nuanced meaning of the verb 'to receive' is well worth a moment of our time. When we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior, God lays hold of us, takes possession of us, and makes us His own. Receiving carries the connotations of an eager pursuit, where God is always striving to reach for us, and when He graciously grasps hold of us in body, mind and spirit, our own desire is to yield ourselves completely as we become a part of God's family. There is no violence associated with this taking hold; it is as welcome as the intimacy between a lover and their beloved. And so, becoming a beloved child of God is an amazing gift of God's salvific grace, as well as a life-giving creative act. "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."

As I always tell our baptismal candidates, God does not want much, just our whole self. God's chorus may be more, "I want **YOU** all" than "I want **IT** all". The divine desire to catch us, hold us and transform us with His love is a very apt description of how we become children of God through our faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. We will never have a more intimate and loving relationship than the one we share with our Lord and Savior. The Word came to lead people to life. "The Eternal Birth," says Eckhart, "must take place in [us]." The birth of Jesus Christ in each of us is for a purpose beyond ourselves. God continues to dwell in the hearts of all believers by the power of the Holy Spirit. As children of God, and like John the Baptist, we too are called to be living witnesses of God's love and hope, God's light and life. Let the Savior be born again and again in the mansion of our hearts. Let us all sing our thanks and praise to God for His miraculous gift. Together, let us give *our* all in His name.

Amen.