

Christmas 2022

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Date: 25 December 2022

Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[0 : 00] In our collect, or the prayer of the day for Christmas, we prayed, Grant that we being regenerate, that is, being washed, renewed, restored, and made thy children by adoption and grace may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit.

Our renewal and adoption come by what we witnessed at the very beginning of our Mass this morning. It comes by way of holy baptism.

So the question is, how can simple water being poured over one's head make us adopted children of the Creator and God of the universe?

Well, in order to understand this sacrament, we first have to grasp what Christmas is all about. We celebrate this day because the greatest miracle in all of human history took place as the God who created all things took upon himself our flesh and blood and entered into our fallen world.

God took the DNA and the blood of his mother, Mary, and was born on Christmas morning. You see, our God is not some distant force in the sky.

[1 : 30] Our God is not some elderly and white-bearded figure that rides on a cloud. Our God is the one who humbled himself beyond all human comprehension in order to redeem, in order to restore us, creatures of flesh and blood, by taking our human body upon himself and coming as a helpless child being born in a feeding trough in Bethlehem.

This morning, dear friends, we confess this miracle of the incarnation, God becoming man, as a mystery beyond all mysteries.

It is a miracle that defies and transcends our finite and our limited minds. But again, it is the very heart of the Christian faith.

And the God who created all things, and he who is over all things, is the God who loves us so much that he came in the lowliest way possible.

He came as a helpless human being, as a baby. He came as an infant lying in a feeding trough. He came to offer himself in love, which would lead him to the cross, as the willing lamb and sacrifice, so that we now share in his divine life, in his immortality, by his own shed blood.

[3 : 13] And this takes us back to the sacrament of holy baptism. Because it is the vehicle, it is the conduit, if you will, that connects us to our God by the work and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit uses water that connects us to our Lord's birth, his life, his death, his resurrection and ascension.

And this morning, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, his holy nativity, as we also witnessed the miracle of a new birth in the baptism of Anna.

And today, we are to reflect on our own entrance as we are to come to God as helpless babes, our entrance into new life, where we, too, were washed and made clean.

The God who humbled himself, taking our human flesh upon himself and having his mother's blood flow through his own body is the God who now comes to us through the simple, the ordinary, the unspectacular stuff of creation.

[4 : 37] And namely, water. He comes washing us in the waters of holy baptism, which we just witnessed. He comes to us in the ordinary stuff of bread and wine in the Holy Eucharist.

He comes to us through the voices and the care of fallible ministers who speak his words of forgiveness and grace. Friends, the God that we serve is not some capricious deity who we can only hope might have mercy upon us at the end.

No, the God that we experience and the one to whom we read about in Holy Scripture is the God who confirms his own love to us by taking upon our flesh our blood and then using these unspectacular, these ordinary earthly means like water, bread, wine, ordained servants of his word to lavish his grace and his love upon us.

By the power of the Holy Spirit. And who is this love for? Who shares in this love? Well, in verses 12 and 13 of our gospel text of John chapter one, we hear the following words.

But as many as received him, Christ, to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe on his name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but born of God.

[6 : 21] And who is this God? The final verse of our gospel reading answers that question as we read in verse 14. And the word became flesh.

The word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The eternal word of God is Jesus. And that word came into this world in the weakest and most vulnerable manner so that we might be renewed, that we might be washed, that we might be adopted into the family of God, whereby we receive the Holy Spirit and are made children of God. Baptism. Baptism is God's work. It's God's work. It's not ours. Baptism is what God does for us. Cleansing, washing. And that is what Anna received this morning. She received God's undeserved grace.

[7 : 38] She received the washing away of sins and the entrance into the kingdom of God. And this is what we are to ponder and marvel at as well.

Because God became man. God, the creator of all things, became a helpless human being, a baby, so that now in him, we might participate in his divinity, being partakers of his divine nature and sharing in his love for all eternity.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.