

The Word made flesh

Second Sunday After Christmas

Published in the Ministry District of Yorke Peninsula

Sunday, January 2, 2022

The late Anthony DeMello in his book the Song of the Bird wrote a particular meditation that gives us much to reflect upon in this Christmas season. DeMello tell us of a Christian who could not find the courage to look straight into the eyes of Jesus. Something inside this person made such an encounter almost an impossibility. Perhaps it was the memory of some failure. Perhaps it was the fear that comes with any act of believing. Perhaps it was a tragic lack of self-esteem. Whatever the reason, the Christian simply feared to have the Christ peer into the depths of his or her soul.

One day, this individual happened to meet the Lord Jesus on the street. At their meeting, Jesus invited the person to look into those deep and powerful eyes. At first, the Christian was more than timid. But slowly, and only slowly, their eyes met. The Lord looked long and warmly in return, seeing in this disciple exactly who and what was there. And then to the complete surprise of our fearful Christian, Jesus simply said, "I love you."

In this holy season of Christmas, we are too often prevented by the romance of the feast from tasting the awesome reality of its rhythm. Like the believer we just heard about, we also need to catch the stunning and brutal truth of the message of Christmas, that God has come among us and lives within us, loving us despite our own rashness and fear, despite our running from God's acceptance of our very selves. And it is this message, this truly good news that is at the heart of God's word to us this day.

Whoever it was that stitched this Christian hymn into the text of John provided Christians with a glimpse of the whole story of the remainder of the gospel. In this hymn the beauty of the whole of Christian faith is encapsulated. - The Word, the self-disclosure of the God who is beyond our own words and thoughts, enters into the condition of being human. The Word becomes flesh and dwells among us. The God of the universe becomes the God of humanity by embracing that which God is not: human flesh. Heaven and earth are wed; the failure of Adam and Eve to trust is overturned; and sinful humanity is once again made whole. This very act should be the cause of our own joy and an invitation to a new way of living. But is it? Sadly, oftentimes it is not.

If we were to ask ourselves the question, "Has God really embraced my flesh?" we might have to answer that many times we refuse to believe this basic tenet of our faith. But why? Inasmuch as we are graced and saved persons, human beings can engage in a type of deadening self-concern over failures which can result in a lack of ownership of our salvation. We run far from the embrace that constantly seeks to make us whole despite our sinfulness. Even outside of ourselves, we look to our world and are tempted toward a dark despair when we view violence, hatred and war. It is too difficult for us to see the "beauty" of Christmas in the homeless, the abandoned and those who are most marginalised in our society. And yet the Word which we

celebrate, has indeed become flesh. God has pitched the tent of meeting not outside us, but within us. And it is pitched within all of us. If our reading from John's gospel this day means anything for us at all, then it must remind us that the presence of God is to be found deep within the human heart: in its joys as well as in its ugliness. The word this day compels us to examine the imprudence of our own eyes to see the Christ precisely in the poor and the abandoned. It compels us to wonder if our rejection of God's special children is our escape from the gnawing fear that God will reject us. And we must again wonder if we have missed the point of this holy season: the Word has become flesh and made a dwelling among us.

We are the believers who are invited today to peer into the eyes of the Lord Jesus. Timid and fearful, we must gaze into the eyes of the Christ who bears us the gift of all reconciliation. And when Jesus tells us that we are loved to the depths of our being, then we will come to know the full meaning of reconciliation. A strange word, this reconciliation. It comes from the Latin meaning "eyelash." Today we stand eyelash to eyelash with God. God sees and loves us exactly as we are. We see in God, all that we might dare to become.

AMEN