



Allocutio



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Allocutio: Christmas thoughts

I referred to the Incarnation last month and in one sense that is the great event in that at that moment the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became man. In that moment God entered the world he had created and began his human journey. So what is the value of his birth and why do we almost celebrate that as if more important than his Incarnation?

This perhaps comes down to the importance psychologically of someone's birth. We know the child is already there in the womb. At a prayer meeting recently I heard from a proud granny that when another grandchild was on the way the yet-to-be-born's older sister, then coming up to 4 years of age, would say to the child inside her mother's tummy, "Hello, baby! I can't wait to see you". And the mother reported that when the little girl would say this she could feel the baby kicking inside her. A baby already knows sounds by the time they are born and knows mammy's voice and perhaps daddy's and others. These are further proofs of that living person in the womb. Do we not say in the Advent Preface about Mary that she bore Christ "with love beyond all telling"? She loved the Redeemer already here with us 9 months before his birth.

But once the child is born we can all see it. It is clearly a baby, a member of our human family. To see it allows us interact with it and we can smile at it and talk to it and see its reactions. The child in the womb is more passive. It sees no face and has limited interaction with others. But for the baby its primal cry is the beginning of its work here. Its mission as a human has begun. Oh yes, greatly dependent on mother and others it has to learn to know itself and its calling and take that responsibility up. It is now in the world of interpersonal relationships that help form its spirit.

Jesus of course already had an impact on others before he was born. We know he touched the Baptist still in his mother's womb with the effects of Baptism so that Original Sin was taken away. Clearly he touched Elizabeth. Zachary's Benedictus may be an expression of how Jesus already touched his life. But once born Jesus is having an impact on all around. Angels sing, shepherds gaze in wonder, the Wise men do him homage, Herod's paranoia goes berserk and Simeon and Anna sing their praise of God and the child. He is now affecting history although still only a babe in arms.

The Letter to the Hebrews says, "But in these last days God has spoken to us through a Son". That is the mission of Jesus, to speak on behalf of God to us, not in a language that is obscure but by his actions and the person we find in human flesh. Already in the crib God is speaking massively. For here is God's own Son, who was with the Father as the world was created, being born in poverty. By so doing already God is massively changing the goalposts. No longer does money or family or status or health have any standing. And when we think how often people from among the poorest of the poor have come to the forefront like St. Martin de Porres or Matt Talbot or how those of



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noble or wealthy birth have chucked that all is as in the case of St. Francis of Assisi (the first to make a crib is a good example at this time of year) then it reminds us all that what really matters is what lies in the integrity of heart of us all. The Manger at Bethlehem reminds us that God looks to the heart, not at appearances.

I mentioned us beginning our mission at birth. In the Letter to the Hebrews we read that it quotes Ps 40 and puts its words in our Lord's mouth. "Sacrifices and offerings you do not desire; but rather you have prepared a body for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you take no pleasure. Then I said 'Behold, I have come to do your will.'" That is why Jesus was born: to do God's will. That doing of God's will as Jesus said at the well in Samaria was his food. Time and time again he reiterated that that was his mission: to do the Father's will.

Doing God's will for Jesus was to live a very human life and a full life in a mere 33 years ending with his total submission on the Cross. From the Manger to the Cross Jesus alerts us that that road is not a cake-walk. It was a life full of disturbance and trouble, of promise and failure, of being loved and being rejected.

"Here I am Lord, I come to do your will." As we look into the crib let us take this to ourselves too and say, "Lord, I accept what you send". To kneel on a hard floor saying the rosary, to put up with a brother or sister whose ways of saying things in the weekly report gets up my nose, to put up with the way the president says the Rosary (could he/she not hurry up), I would prefer to do that work but let me do the best at this less desirous work, to put up with my lot in my office and getting no buzz from it but to still do it professionally and properly and to the best of my ability.

Let us join the handmaid of the Lord and say "Be it done to me according to your word". With her Son let us say, "Not my will but thine be done"!

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill