

**Year ABC: Christmas 1b Is 61:10-62:3; Ps 147; Gal 3:23-4:47; Jn 1:1-18  
St. Barnabas, Florissant – December 29, 2019**

**Focus Sentence:** “Grant that this light, ..., may shine forth in our lives; ...”

**I offer these thoughts in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

In this morning’s reading from John’s Gospel, the passage that Bible scholars call the “Prologue” to that Gospel, we hear those famous words that really sum up the tremendous mystery that we’ve been celebrating during the Christmas season: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, ... .” (That’s the *New Revised Standard Version* of the quotation, by the way.)

*The Common English Bible*, a newer translation than the NRSV, puts it this way: “The Word became flesh and made his home among us.” Better, I think.

John’s original Greek would probably be best translated, “The Word was made flesh and pitched his tent among us.” Most of us don’t live in tents, but ... interesting.

But I like the way that *The Message* (a fresh and idiomatic, contemporary version of the Bible) puts it: “The Word became flesh and moved into the neighborhood.” God’s moving into the neighborhood is a startling phrase that conveys the real power of the Incarnation that overcomes even the most stubborn local zoning boards.

## **PAUSE**

Of course, when we say that the Word of God (and remember that, for the ancients, a person’s “word” was an extension of that person) “moved into the neighborhood,” or “pitched his tent among us,” the logical conclusion is that, prior to the moving in or pitching, the Word was NOT among us humans. Leaving aside the truth that God *was, is, and always will be* present in ALL of creation, the mystery of the Incarnation that we mark at Christmas time celebrates the fact that, in Jesus the Word, the “extension” of God came to be present in a different and much more personal way.

And what is that different and fuller presence of God among humanity? John goes on to describe it this way: “What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

Well, that comment got me to thinking about light, and what really *is* light? And why does John talk about the darkness that can’t overcome this light?

Well, you might have heard the quote in the recent weeks leading up to Christmas, that’s used a lot this time of year. “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness --- on them light has shined.” (Is. 9:2) Long before Isaiah wrote those words, the author of Genesis said that, “in the beginning,” “darkness covered the face of the deep, ... . Then God said, ‘Let there be light;’ and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; ...” So, in case you didn’t know it already, darkness is bad, and light is good. In darkness, we lose our way, we stumble, fall, and we hurt ourselves. In darkness, things around us look unfamiliar and obscure. In the light, everything becomes clear and colorful, and we can walk safely. Interestingly, you can’t actually see light itself, but only whatever is lit up by the light. And that’s appropriate here too, because we really can’t see God, but only whatever is illuminated by God. And so it’s the *reflection* of light by something that really enables us to “see” light indirectly.

## **PAUSE**

So Jesus is the “true light, which enlightens everyone,” writes John. And this enlightenment that Jesus brings, gives to us and to all who receive and believe in Jesus “power to become children of God.”

With the Word comes light and truth and glory and grace which frees us from the prison and guardianship of the Law, as Paul explains it to the Galatians. When God moves into the block, we can then move from our infancy and dependency into a mature relationship with our God --- a relationship of faith, and with the responsibility to use the inheritance now available to us in its fullness. We can rejoice in this salvation because the God who moves in next door to us adopts us through Jesus as God's own children. By Baptism and living faith, we accept and live in the wonderful new light and truth and glory and grace that is ours in Christ Jesus.

## **PAUSE**

No wonder we rejoice and delight and exult in this season of celebrating God's love --- when God moves in with us, even in TO us, God then opens the closet door to dress us up as we never thought possible --- as cover models for God's Kingdom magazine!

## **AMEN**