

**Catholic Church of the Beatitudes
Santa Barbara, CA**

Christmas Eve, Cycle B – December 25, 2011

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Reflections on **John 1: 1-18;**
and **Luke 2:1-14**
“Awakening the Fire of Love”

One of my favorite quotes from Teilhard de Chardin imposed itself on me as I was reflecting on this Christmas homily. It is this:

**Someday, after mastering the winds,
the waves, the tides, and gravity, we
shall harness for God the energies of
Love, and then, for a second time in
the history of the world, humanity will
have discovered FIRE.**

I chose to explore with you this evening two themes: the mystical dimension of the Christ—the Fire, and the humanity of the baby whose birth we celebrate tonight—Jesus, son of Mary. That is why we read from two gospels: the gospel of John and the gospel of Luke. Mark does not have a birth narrative and Matthew’s birth narrative centers on the visit of the Magi. Luke has the descriptive events of the birth of Jesus while John introduces the Word made Flesh in his mystical prologue. The prologue is exquisite, mystical poetry. It echoes the poetic Genesis account of creation: *In the beginning...* So in reality, this evening we are celebrating two incarnations of God’s very self:

- The first is the creation of the cosmos at the beginning of time. *In the beginning...*
- The second is Jesus the Christ who came at a dark time in history as radiance shining anew.

In John’s prologue we see the Christ characterized both as pre-existent and as an agent in the creation of the world. John writes that the Word was with God in the beginning, and that later the Word was made flesh in Jesus.

Without John’s insight we might think today the “the Christ” and “Jesus” were synonymous, and the “the Christ” came into being only with Jesus’s conception.

Luke’s gospel narrative of the birth of Jesus is one aspect of the Christ, but it is not the whole picture. The Word existed as Second Person of the Blessed Trinity before Jesus. Later in history, “The Word became flesh.” With these words, John identifies Jesus as a being containing both spirit and humanity, the exemplar of all aspects of oneness: of heaven and earth, life and death, east and west, of men and women—all existing eternally. In the birth of Jesus, what is outside time—the Christ—is joined to what is within time.

I truly marvel at the great wonderful wisdom of God who brings the most glorious, enormous, astounding truth to us in small, plain, naked, unadorned things: like newborns and like seeds. We are able to hold in our hand the might of the oak tree, or a whole garden of flowers by holding their seeds; in the same way because of the birth of Jesus, we know we can hold the love that creates universes in our hearts. How wonderful of God to teach us not to fear power-

ful love, but to hug it, cradle it and let ourselves be hugged and cradled by it. It is the gift of a new-born. We can hardly contain our joy as we hold a new bundle of energy in our arms!

So this evening, we honor the Christ of the Trinity and we welcome Jesus, who is the Light of the World. We profess our belief that Jesus comes to enlighten everyone. There is nowhere this Light does not shine. It can pierce the stoniest recesses of our hearts. It can break open in us and drop us into a void of incandescent light: a light resembling a fire—a fire that burns but does not consume—a fire that stirs into flames the love we desire to receive and to give—a fire that purges away all that is not love and purifies the intensity of our love.

“Were not our hearts burning within us?” We hear the disciples exclaim as they reflected on their encounter with the Risen

Jesus. From the moment of his birth, through his passion and death and to the event of His Resurrection Jesus wants to enflame us. He wants to burn deeply in our hearts and awaken in the depths of our beings all our desires for union—for oneness. He wants to bring about a transformation in us so we, in turn, can contribute to the transformation of the world.

So let us pray that the events of the celebration of the Word made flesh to live among us continue to inspire us. And let us join our beliefs with the belief of Teilhard de Chardin who proclaimed that:

The day will come when, after we have mastered the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love. Then for the second time in the history of the world, humankind will have discovered fire.