

## **In Nomine Iesu**

### **Christmas Day, the Nativity of our Lord 2024**

#### **John 1:14 – The very particular joy of Christmas**

“And 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.”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman.  
Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

#### *Exordium*

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” In this way John brought together in one Israel’s understanding of creation and the Creator and the thinking of the Gentile’s most advanced philosophers. Israel, God’s chosen people, had the answer to the problem of sin, death, and evil, and the promise that went with it, even though many of them ignored it. The Gentiles had the curiosity and intellect that had searched for what they termed the “First Mover,” the Logos, the divine reason that pervades and is the source of all things, for hundreds of years. For that reason John proclaimed to Jew and Gentile alike, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:4-5)

Let us rise and rejoice that the promised light has come into the world this happy morning!

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When Adam and Eve ate from the tree in the midst of the garden of Eden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they seized the one thing in all the world God had not given them, and so, they added the one thing missing from God's creation. They added death. Because of what they added, they would come to know know hurt, sorrow, betrayal, shame, and, amazingly, the fear of Him who gave them only what was good, what was very good. Their children would come to know the same, and their children's children. Rather than being good stewards of God's perfect creation as He desired, they handed the dominion God had given to them over to the devil and to the misshapen desires of their now rebellious hearts. We, their children, bear their guilt by right of inheritance. It is ours. And we apples have not fallen far from the tree they planted. We have added to God's perfect creation and to their original sin. We each have added our own evil and so filled this garden we call earth with thorns, thistles and weeds that no one could undo all the evil we have collectively done. Or so it would seem.

## I

The solution to the problem of evil we created for ourselves could only come from Him who is the Source of all good. For this purpose the Creator and Father gave His only begotten Son. And so, God became Man, was born of a virgin, became one of us, joined Himself to the lineage of Adam, so that He could bear the penalty of our first parents' sin together with that of all their children have added since. He became a man so that He could inherit Adam's guilt for us. He became incarnate in order to be the atoning sacrifice for our sin. He was born in Bethlehem's stable to be forsaken, to be defiled by the

hateful hands of violent men, nailed to a cross of torture and shame. It is His terrible death on the lonesome cross of Calvary that is the source of the peace of which the Christmas angels sang. It caused the shepherds to rejoice. For the killing of gentle Mary's innocent Son is God's good will toward men. It is our peace on earth. Somebody had to die because of our sins. So Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God and Man, was born to die, in order to set us free.

This is the reason why He who daily opens His hand to satisfy the needs of every living thing, had no place to lay His head. This is why there was no room for Him in the inn, no room in all of the creation for Him. He was a worm and no man, as Isaiah said, an outcast, stricken, smitten, and afflicted. He willingly set aside for a time His divine rights and attributes, humbling Himself, so that He could suffer in our place, could know hunger, tired feet and an aching back, experience sorrow, betrayal by friends, and disappointment. He lived as man in Adam's fallen, corrupt world. He lived as a man, yet without sin, completely innocent, in order to receive the just penalty of all the guilty, and pay it in full for us.

He was tempted as a man by the devil to forego His humanity, and so abandon us to sin and death. He was tempted to fully take up His divine power, the power that was His by right of being the only-begotten of the Father, co-equal with Him and reign over the fallen world in power rather than redeem and restore it by humility, suffering, and death. He was tempted to not go hungry, not do without, not be hurt or mocked. He would be

tempted to come down from the cross and leave us to our just reward: death, hell, and the devil. But He would not do it. He would not do it, because somebody had to die. Somebody had to defeat the devil, someone had to break the grip hell had on all the children of Adam, and open the gates of heaven. Somebody had to make us His again, had to redeem the creation. He came to seek and to save the lost, to lay down His life as a ransom, to be lifted up on the cross and so draw all people to Himself. Somebody had to do this so that the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve might be pardoned, and become as innocent children once more, as though they never sinned. Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Mary, came to fulfill the Father's will. He was born this day to crush the head of Eden's lying serpent and reconcile the world to Himself.

He became one of us so that He could take what was rightly ours: guilt, sin, shame, death, so that He could take it away from us completely and forever. He has done just that by His suffering and death. There is no more to pay. It is done, complete, finished. There are no strings attached, no further charges. Jesus is the complete package, the signed, sealed and delivered, wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger accessible to all, the gift of life from God to man, from God to you.

## II

This is the gift the Christmas angels told the shepherds to go and see. There in the stable, there in the feedbox, there wrapped in swaddling cloths, was God's gift of life and peace to all the world ... and to you. There is nothing left for you to do but believe that Mary's Son has done it all. Now, thanks be to God, nobody has to die! Death has died

in Christ. He died to kill death for you and in you. He descended into hell, as we confess in the Apostles' Creed, the creed of your baptism, in order to prove that that hell could not hold Him or any who are His by faith. He rose on Easter morning to prove to all nations, all who descend from Eve, the mother of all living, that the debt has been fully paid, the curse has been lifted.

These are the the things the most honored, most blessed of all women pondered in her heart that first day of her newborn Son's life. She had been overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. The eternal Son of God had been conceived in her virgin womb. The Father's will would be accomplished in a way breathtaking in its simplicity and amazing in its power. The helpless Child would overcome the power of sin.

Dear friends, this is the scandal of the Son of God's birth. When God first gave His pledge to crush the serpent's head with the Seed of the woman, that is, to give His only begotten Son, God had to become man. He had to become a particular man in a particular place, born to a particular mother. He had to come into the world on a particular day, this day! He had to die a particular death to pay for all the particular sins and evils we particular people have inflicted on our world and on each other. This particular Man, born in Bethlehem and crucified at Calvary, had to send forth into the world particular men to proclaim a particular Gospel. He had to institute a particular way for particular people to receive the gift God alone had determined to give. You see, Christmas comes down to the particular. If it were not so, the gift of forgiveness, life

and salvation that has drawn us particular people to this particular place on this particular day of the year would not be real. Christmas really would be about nothing more than what we see in so many front yards: reindeer and snowmen. Christmas would be about whatever families gathered around whatever they, in their imagination, think to be special about this day, giving gifts that will not last. And this Christmas Day would come and go as all the others before and after, until each of us died and went on to the reward, the penalty, we deserve. Dear friends, in our day and age, people are scandalized that God's word tells us that Christmas is not whatever we want or imagine it to be. Many preachers preach meaningless sermons filled with warm, fuzzy, politically correct trivialities so as to please everyone, and end up satisfying no one. But the truth remains. Christmas is what God says it is: The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, with all the particular details only real history provides.

Let us ponder these particular things in our own very particular hearts, because this particular gift of the Creator to His fallen creation, is given to you and to me, here and now. Do you, yes, you sitting in your particular place, believe that? Somebody able to bear the full weight of our sins had to atone for the sins of us all. Somebody had to be born to be the sacrifice for your sins and mine. Today, that Someone was born, so no one has to die. Faith clings to this very particular Someone. Faith trusts in Him alone. Christmas is particular. For that very reason it is wonderful. Merry Christmas to all and to each. Amen.

**Soli Deo Gloria**

