



BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

Nativity of the Lord
December 25, 2025
Sr. Belinda Monahan

Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6
Hebrews 1:1-6
John 1:1-18

Christmas is one of those days when I feel wholly inadequate to be standing up here. There is too much to say; and also I find myself worried that what I DO say will be trite. This paradox is actually woven into the celebration of Christmas itself and is at the heart of our lives as Christians.

Today we celebrate an all-powerful God who came—who comes—to live among us AS one of us. And God comes not with the trappings of power but as a baby. Not commanding great wealth, but in a stable. Not supported by a vast network of cronies, but at the whim of the rules of this world. This is the God—a God of infinite power and infinite love—whose birth we commemorate and celebrate today. Whose life we share with one another and with the world daily.

The God we hear about in today's scriptures is an awesome God—in all sense of that word. Beginning with the Gospel, the evangelist's poetic proclamation of the Word, who was present at, and active in, the creation of the world. Who is revealed as the light of the human race. This word of course, we know to be Jesus, whose coming is described in the Gospel acclamation as a great light dawning upon the earth and in the letter to the Hebrews as the bright light (I had to look up *refulgence*)—of God's glory, whom the angels worship.

There is no light imagery in the reading from Isaiah, but God brings salvation and is announced as king. The psalm sings of God's saving power; of God's wondrous deeds of salvation and justice. The God we hear about today is an awesome God.

And, yet, the reading from Isaiah also speaks of comfort and the psalmist extols God's kindness and faithfulness—much more homely virtues. Those of us who attended liturgy last night; either lessons and carols here or Mass somewhere else heard an additional set of readings. The Gospel of the Mass at night is the familiar and human story from Luke; Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem and the baby being born in a manger; the same scene we see in the creche in front of the altar. Although I don't know that anyone heard the Vigil readings, the Gospel of Matthew includes the very human genealogy of Jesus. Our awesome God comes to be part of the human family in very human ways.

Returning to today's Gospel, we hear "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." And grace and truth looks like a baby, a poor baby born in obscurity. Grace and truth is the presence of God—a mighty and awesome God—in the midst of our humanity. Who chose to be one of us, in human poverty and weakness and frailty.

And because I have spent the entirety of Advent reminding the catechumens of this: Christmas does not merely commemorate a God who came among us 2000 years ago, but also celebrates our God who comes among us today. The awesome God described in today's readings chooses to be one with us in our poverty and our weakness and our frailty.

This is the God we celebrate today. Merry Christmas.