

*Sermon for 1 Christmas*  
*by Fr. Garrin W. Dickinson*  
*Holy Nativity, Plano*  
*28 December, 2008*

Our Lord Jesus came into the world to give us something. St. John tells us that the “true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.” And the coming of the eternal Word was not some flashy show of power. He came to give a gift. “But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” We are offered a new birth, to become children again, not in the flesh to merely human parents. We’ve done that already. We’re invited to start an absolutely new life with God as our Father.

Notice that not all of the human race are children of God. Only those who have received the Incarnate Word. Only those who have trusted in his name. And in this context, the name is not merely a word. It’s our connection with the person of Jesus. To “believe in his name” is to trust him in everything he says about himself and who he is. It’s to enter into that relationship that will give meaning to our lives. It’s to obey everything he tells us in the bible and to welcome his continued presence, power, and authority in our lives, through the Holy Spirit.

Also notice that even we are given power only to *become* children of God. As we continue to receive Jesus, as we continue to trust him and obey him, we begin to share in the divine life that he has in himself. We are truly “born again” with the true life that is of God. And we begin to reflect the character of God, as it is revealed to us in Jesus. Children of God will grow up to be like God, except that we will always be creatures.

The prophet Isaiah has a vision of what the children of God will be like when they have grown to maturity. He speaks with the voice of such a person. “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall exult in my God”. The mature child of God finds joy in God before anything else. Nothing makes him happier than his relationship with God.

But that relationship with God as Father comes with other gifts as well. For “he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness”. Those who trust in God and delight in him will be made good by the power and the grace of God. Just as nature is sure to produce green shoots in the spring, so the Lord is sure to produce goodness and righteousness in those who receive him in the person of Jesus Christ.

Last week, I spoke of Mary's example of submission to God. "Behold, the slave of the Lord," she said, "Let it be to me according to his will." And that's where it must start with all of us. But it doesn't end there. We don't just spend eternity as slaves. Our submission must come first in order to accept God's gift of salvation. But then we continue as children of God and heirs of all that he has promised.

St. Paul tells us that "God has sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts". And he goes even further here than St. John. He says we have been adopted not just as children of God but as sons. That doesn't mean that we are all male or masculine to God. It means that we are heirs, inheritors with Jesus of the kind of righteousness and salvation produced by the Spirit of God's Son in our own lives. Through total submission, we receive the freedom and power and eternal life that God has in himself.

God has given us this gift through the Incarnation of his eternal Son. This is the grace and truth that have come through Jesus Christ. We may find freedom and power and grace and glory in him. But only through being born again by the power of the Holy Spirit, and by receiving him for who he is, our Lord.