

***Sermon for Christmas Eve (I)***  
***by Fr. Garrin W. Dickinson***  
***Holy Nativity, Plano***  
***24 December, 2006***

I'm going to ask you to do something uncomfortable. I want each of you to think about a broken relationship in your lives. You know the one I mean. For some of you it's a friend from way back, maybe high school or college. For some of you it's a family member. For some of you, maybe it's a parent. It's that person with whom you had a falling out, the one you used to have a good relationship with, and then something went wrong. It doesn't matter what went wrong: an argument, a fight, just a steady divergence of lifestyle.

Now, think with me for a moment about that relationship and what it would take to put it back together. Not about who was at fault initially. In most cases, that information is buried so far back that it might even be a meaningless question. But given that two people who love each other are now not speaking to one another, what has to happen for them to start again? The answer is that one of the two people has to make himself vulnerable. Someone has to take the first step, knowing that the other might still reject him.

It's a frightening thing, that first overture of love that may be rejected. It's a humiliating thing to do, no matter who you are, whether you're the sinner or the sinned against. But if you want a relationship back, if you want to regain your brother or your father or your wife or your daughter or your friend, it must be done. There is no other way. Someone has to accept humiliation; someone has to expose himself to rejection.

So what do you think this little baby in the manger is all about? Most of us start life as a baby. That's just the way it is. But not him. He started out as Almighty God. And then he chose to become a baby. He chose the helplessness and humiliation of becoming a child. The eternal Word of God would be crying wordlessly and helplessly right now, if his human family had not known to swaddle him, to wrap him tightly in clean cloths to make him feel secure and keep him from crying. He will choose even more humiliation and even more suffering later on, but for now this is enough.

And why does he choose this? Why does the sovereign Master of the Universe choose to make himself vulnerable like this? Because it must be done in order to restore the relationship he originally had with you and with me. And of all the infinite things he might think of to create and to have, he wants more than anything else to have you and me back. I don't know why. If it were me, I would have just rubbed you all out and gone back to the drawing board. But that's the difference between God and me. The passion of his existence is to restore his relationship with us.

And so he is the Prince of Peace. As he rules more and more in us, peace will increase. He makes peace himself by taking the first step, making himself vulnerable as a human baby with human parents. Some of you will reject him. He knows that. He does it anyway. Someone has to do it, and he knows we can't.

The only question left is this: How shall we respond to this God? How shall we respond to "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us"? Do we turn our backs on him? Do we choose to continue with the relationship broken? Do we really want to live without God? He's prepared for that. But are you? He came back for you, even knowing you might choose that.

There is only one more option: Respond to this child in the manger as the God of the Universe, whom he is. Become as passionate about him as he is about you. Allow him to become your constant companion and master. And you will find that he does not bring oppression, but peace.