

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Christmas

## *Christ, The Wisdom Of God*

*We celebrate Christ, the incarnate wisdom of God who has come to dwell in our midst.*

*(Readings: Ecclesiasticus 24: 1-2, 8-12. Ephesians 1: 3-6, 15-18. John 1: 1-18.)*

We all go through life making a whole variety of promises to each other. Some are simple promises, such as saying that we will meet someone at a specific time. Some are rather more profound, such as committing ourselves to a certain person, or to a particular way of life. Some promises are easy to keep and cost nothing: “Don’t worry! I’ll meet you in the club at 5 o’ clock.” Other promises can take a whole lifetime to keep: “To have and to hold from this day forward...to love and to cherish, till death us do part.”

When we make promises we invest ourselves in our words: we ask others to believe that we are as good as our word. We tell others that they can put their hope and trust in us.

At significant, or solemn moments of our lives, we use words to pledge ourselves and our future. New beginnings are marked by words that are carefully spoken and publicly announced. Witnesses are usually around to hear and to take note of what is being said. It’s as if the words we speak have a life all of their own. As the poet Emily Dickinson wrote:

A word is dead  
When it is said,  
Some say.  
I say it just  
Begins to live  
That day.

We hope that our words will live, but we know that there is nothing magical about them. It doesn’t always follow, that we will actually do what we say. We spend a lot of time trying to live up to our words, all too often lagging behind them; we fail to keep our promises; and if the truth be known, mostly, we simply cannot be bothered.

When we fail to be as good as our word, people naturally wonder whether our word has any value or worth at all. Eventually, people end up paying little or no attention to anything we say. And when that happens our word becomes like old currency that has no value; like ‘Monopoly’ money – only good for gratuitous, self-indulgent games.

In today’s Gospel we hear the magnificent Prologue to John’s Gospel: how in the beginning there was the Word through whom all things came to be. When John comes to speak about Jesus one cannot help to notice how he goes back beyond the time of Jesus’ birth and conception, to the very beginning of time itself.

John sees Jesus as the Word that was with God; the Word that *was* God. This Word was not only *in* the beginning, it *made* the beginning for all creation. The Word of God worked! It wasn’t merely an empty word, a vague sound floating in the air. It was a Word that had power to make the beginning of the world. “God said, ‘Let there be... and so there was.’”

In the Genesis story – the story of the beginning – all God has to do is to speak. And when he does speak, something happens, he speaks the world into existence. God’s word is creative: it always goes beyond himself to make happen what is said. For God, to say is to do; to speak is to accomplish; to promise is to fulfil.

God is always as good as his word. And John rejoices in his Gospel that this Word which made the beginning now comes into the world. The Word becomes flesh and dwells among us. The Word is not only a great power that makes all things; the Word is a person and becomes little in time and space. The Word of God comes among his people; among his own elect. But he experiences rejection. The Word is a person in search of a hearing, a human being in search of acceptance, the Son of God in search of acknowledgement. And *this* is the great mystery we celebrate at Christmas.

At Christmas we celebrate the great mystery of God among us: that God gave himself away in the person of Jesus; that he chose to reveal himself in the reality of the life and death of Jesus. Throughout the entire history of all the world’s myriad and diverse religions this is a truly unique and unprecedented story.

As Christians, we believe that our truest resource, our most essential means for understanding God is in the person of Jesus, his only Begotten-Son. For it is in Jesus that we have everything there is to know about God.

At Christmas we celebrate the humanity of God, who came among us as himself. And we celebrate the love that waits for an answer. We know that if our words fail, the Word of God never fails. It has power still; now and always. That is why we pray before Communion:

“Lord, I am not worthy  
that you should enter under my roof,  
but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

We pray that God will speak his Word again in us; that just as he made the beginning through his Word, he will make a new beginning in us. In the Eucharist, we pray that the Word will grow in us; that it will influence all our own words, so that we will be as good as our word. For this to be done, the Word of God and our own word must become one. And it does, our own word will also work.