

uncreated, the Holy Spirit uncreated; the Father infinite, the Son infinite, the Holy Spirit infinite; the Father eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal. And yet there are not three Eternals, but one Eternal” (Athanasian Creed vv. 8-11).

This mind-bending stuff is heavy theology on Christmas. But we are celebrating the mystery of the Incarnation. The mystery of the Incarnation is exactly what it claims to be: a mystery. Everything that John said about the Word was and remains true even if we cannot wrap our minds around it. We won’t ever fully understand the mysteries of God on this side of heaven. That’s what makes them mysteries. Our duty as Christians is simply to confess them as true.

So not only is the Word eternal, but this Word also stepped into time and *became* Man. According to **Philippians 2:6**, “**He emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, not counting equality with God a thing to be grasped.**” What this means is, Jesus didn’t consider it necessary to cling to the privileges that were His as God’s Son in heaven. He obeyed His Father’s will perfectly, even being sent into the world to die for the world.

The Vicar is going to preach pretty extensively on the role of death in the Christmas season tomorrow, and I really hope you come back to hear it. As much as we’d like to keep Christmas about a cute, cuddly baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, we cannot separate Christ’s death from His birth. As we celebrate His birth today, we know that it leads to the cross. Without the cross Christ’s birth would have no worth. For at the cross we see the purpose of Christ coming into the flesh. He came into the flesh to kill the sin of our flesh. As we sing in the beloved Christmas hymn, “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”, Jesus was “born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.” The second birth is a reference to Baptism. Remember the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in **John 3:3-5**, “**Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."** ⁴ **Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"** ⁵ **Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."** The Apostle Paul further makes the connection between being born again and baptism by saying in **Titus 3:5**, “**He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.**” Today we celebrate that Jesus was born not only to die for our sins, but also to give us new birth in Him! That’s how the Gospel usually works. Jesus not only does something for or takes something from us like our sin, but He also gives us something in exchange: new birth, His righteousness, the forgiveness of sins. The Son of God has been doing something for creation since the beginning. Our Gospel reading said at **John 1:3**, “**All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made.**” It is the nature of God to create. It is the nature of the Son of God to serve. Jesus would say later, **Mark 10:45**, “**The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.**”

Jesus is both Son of God and Son of Man. He is Son of God before all worlds. He is Son of Man at the Incarnation. The distinction between the Word *was* in the beginning and the Word *became* flesh is seen perhaps most visibly in the Sacrament of the Altar. Before the Word of God is added to it according to Christ’s institution, the bread and wine remain mere bread and wine. In the same way, before the Word became flesh, the Word remained the Word. But when the Sacrament is celebrated the way Christ instituted it, the bread and wine become also the body and blood of Jesus. There is no change of substance. Bread remains bread and wine remains wine. But now the body and blood of Jesus are also truly present. In the same way, before and after the Incarnation, the Son of God remained God. He was God and He is God. But at the incarnation, He also becomes man. He does not change substance. He remains true God and also is now true man. This is what we confessed in the Athanasian Creed at vv. 32-34, “**Although He is God and man, He is not two, but one Christ: one, however, not by the conversion of the divinity into flesh, but by the assumption of the humanity into God; one altogether, not by confusion (which here, means mixing) of substance, but by unity of person.**” Jesus remains this way even forevermore. True God and True Man for you. Was is Was and Is is Is.

When we celebrate Christmas, we are celebrating mysteries to reason. The mystery of God becoming flesh. The mystery of bread and wine being also Christ’s body and blood. The mystery of our sins nailed to Christ and His righteousness given to us. As John writes, “**But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God**” (**Jn 1:12**). By God’s grace, through faith, you were made His

children, you are children, and you will be His children. Was is was. Is is Is. Will be is will be, even forevermore.
In Jesus' name, Amen.