

Flesh and Blood

John 1:1-18 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1 Perhaps you are concerned with keeping Christ in Christmas. You take offense at abbreviating the holiday Xmas, even though the use of the Greek letter Chi to stand for the holy title Christ is far older than the shorthand for the season. You bristle when theologically astute carols are replaced with Rudolph and Holly Jolly. You cringe when you hear someone wish you a Happy Holidays instead of a Merry Christmas. And you really get irate when someone calls the thing dropping needles and sap onto your carpet a Holiday Tree.

2 So how do you do it? How do you go about keeping Christ in Christmas? If you remind people that "Jesus is the reason for the season," have you done it? If you greet people with "Merry Christmas" instead of "Season's Greetings," have you done it? Even if you remember to go to church on Christmas Day, have you done it? If you suppose that Christ may be removed from Christmas so easily that others around you would be able to remove Him from Christmas, repent. Or if you suppose that how you greet people in the stores, how you sign your cards, how you decorate your house could keep

Christ in Christmas, repent. If you're arrogant enough to think that Christmas belongs to you or to those around you to keep Christ in or take Him out of, repent. Don't suppose you can keep Christ anywhere or put Him anywhere. He'll be where and when He has promised to be.

3 You can't put God in a box, but when He puts Himself into a box, you'd be foolish to look for Him wherever you please. And that's exactly what St. John says the Lord did when He was born of the Virgin Mary. The divine Word of God, the second Person of the Triune Godhead, who was present at the creation of all things, through whom all things were made, this One, the Word, became flesh. God became Mary's Son. He was a zygote, then a blastocyst, then an embryo, then a fetus, then an infant. She wrapped God in swaddling clothes and changed the clothes when he soiled them. She placed God into a manger and picked Him up when He cried. When He was eight days old, they circumcised God and gave Him the name Jesus. Since God has forever joined Himself to human flesh in the person of Jesus, forever placed Himself into this box of flesh and blood, that's where you'll find Him.

4 This infant God, the Word become flesh, grew up. He left the manger. He wouldn't even keep Himself in the Christmas manger because He wasn't born to be a cute baby. God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, placed himself into another box, this one even more shocking than an animal feed trough. God carried His box out from Jerusalem to the place called Golgotha, the hill Calvary. There, He allowed Himself to be nailed to the box of the cross. There, on the cross, you have God in a box, God in the flesh suffering and dying. There, with your flesh, your Lord bore your sin, as well. The sinless God become flesh endured the punishment of a sinner. He was rejected by God the Father as the wrath of God against all sinners was poured out on the One who looked so cute in the manger. This God endured for you, to pay for your sins, even the sins of supposing you might keep Him somewhere or remove Him from someplace.

5 But God in the flesh didn't remain on the cross. He died and they placed His body in a tomb, a box. Had you wanted to find God the Son, you could have found Him in the box of the tomb the three days He was dead. But God in the flesh didn't stay in the box of the tomb, the box of death, either. Having paid the penalty for sin, the Lord rendered death powerless. Having risen from the dead, the Lord appeared to His disciples, to women, to 500 others, and then He ascended. The disciples could no more keep Him with them than you can keep Him in Christmas. But that's not to say He was not with His disciples. Indeed, He promised to be with them, where two or three were gathered. And since God took on flesh, that's not an elusive spiritual presence they could feel in their hearts. That's his bodily, fleshly presence. Nor is it to say that Christ is not in Christmas.

6 Quite the contrary. He has placed Himself in the box of His flesh and blood. And He has placed Himself into the box of otherwise ordinary bread and wine. God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, is where He has promised to be. And here, He has promised to be for you. Here, in this holy Meal, your Lord gives you His very real flesh and blood with bread and wine into your mouths for the forgiveness of sins. Don't rejoice that Christ is in Christmas, unless you also rejoice that the Mass is in Christmass. There in the Mass, the Lord's Supper, is Christ in the flesh, in the blood, for you! Here, God has promised to give himself to you, the very flesh that Mary held in her arms, the very flesh held on the cross with nails, He places into your mouth. The very blood that coursed through the infant Savior's veins, the very blood that flowed with water from his pierced side, is poured into your mouth. Christ is where He has promised to be for you: in the Mass.

7 You cannot keep Christ anywhere or remove Him from anyplace. He will be "in" Christmas because it is the festival of His Nativity. And He will be in Christmas because of the Mass: His flesh and blood are truly present for you in this holy meal.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria
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