

- Deep within the heart of all mankind is a longing. We all have an innate sense that there is more to life than working, taking our kids to soccer games, or watching TV.
- We know that there is even more to life than all the wonderful things that money can buy, success can attain, or freedom can promise.
- Beyond all the mundane tasks that fill our days, beyond our hopes for success and desires for comfort, there is more that our hearts desire.
- At the deepest core of our hearts is a desire for that which transcends this material world and all it can offer. Indeed, at the deepest core of our hearts is a desire for what is eternal: God Himself.
- Try as we might to fulfill this deep longing with material goods, with money or success or fame, everything this world has to offer ultimately rings hollow and unfulfilling.
- This is because only God Himself can fill that void at the deepest center of our souls.
- And so the life of the God-fearing man is a quest for that complete and total union with the Creator, which alone brings us lasting peace.
- When God created man so long ago, He created us for this complete and total union with Him, and our first parents enjoyed this union with Him in the Garden of Eden.
- Yet, it's been speculated by some of the Fathers of the Church that, after their creation, Adam and Eve only lasted 6 hours in the Garden before committing the original sin.
- Sadly, mankind has been rejecting God almost from the first moment He created us!
- While we were created in beauty and have a great capacity for nobility and virtue, while we were created to shine with the very radiance of God Himself, that magnificent gift of freedom that separates us from the animals is so often misused by us, and sometimes with disastrous effects.
- Indeed, each of our individual human natures hangs in this precarious balance between corruptibility and incorruptibility. We can incline ourselves in either fashion, giving our natures either the chance to be ennobled by God's grace or debased by our sins.
- In a sense, during our earthly lives we stand always between the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and we constantly must make the decision as to which tree's fruit we will feed upon. That is the tension of our earthly lives.
- Yet, this tension exists not because of God, but because of us. For His part, God wants us for Himself. He created us for union with Himself. But our sins damage and break our union with Him.
- And when our Lord saw that we could not maintain union with Him on our own, He became one of us to rescue us from our sins and the deadly isolation they cause.
- This is precisely why this feast of Christmas, this feast in which we honor the coming of our Lord in human flesh, is so important. It's why we celebrate Christmas with such great extravagance and fanfare.
- Yet, beyond the gift-giving and merry-making, beyond the feasting and festivities, beyond the saccharine secularism saturating this holiday, there is a potency to this feast that most of the world misses because we're distracted by worldly things.
- Hidden within the flesh of a tiny infant, born to seemingly the most ordinary of parents, and born even in a barn in a backwater town, is the Word-Made-Flesh: God Himself.

- As Isaiah tells us (tonight): “the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom, a light has shone.” And this light is Christ, a light that first burst forth from the manger bed for angels and shepherds to behold!
- And we hear of this from the Gospel (on Christmas morning) from the Beloved St. John:
- *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through Him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*
- *Truly, for us men and for our salvation [Christ] came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man. And for our sake he was crucified.*
- This is no fascinating fable or fairy-tale, no mythical yarn. It’s historical fact. God became man to save us from our sins, to overcome the darkness that surrounds us because we misuse our human freedom, and ultimately to fulfill our deepest longings.
- But we must want Him, for St. John tells us that: *...To those who did accept Him, He gave power to become children of God.* Imagine: being God’s very own child!
- This is Christ’s promise to us. But this is possible only when we love God above all else and beg pardon for our sins.
- This is why the prophet Isaiah cries out in the first reading of the Christmas Eve Mass: *For Zion’s sake I will not be silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be quiet, until her vindication shines forth like the dawn and her victory like a burning torch.... For the LORD delights in you and makes your land his spouse.* God delights in us and wants to save us!
- The fact that God became man is proof positive of this, and this is why Christmas is so important!
- Though prostituted by the world as an excuse for gluttony and greed, Christmas is our chance to turn back to God, to witness His glory, to choose the Tree of Life over the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and to be united to God in peace.
- Beholding the goodness of our Infant King, Christmas is an opportunity to turn away from the darkness of the world to bask in the glorious light of our Savior, the light that shines in the darkness that the darkness cannot overcome.
- My brothers and sisters, be of good cheer this Christmas and enjoy the good things that the world has to offer. Yet do so in a spirit of true gratitude to our Lord, Who has taken on our human flesh in order to save our broken humanity.
- Yet remember that the primordial longing within each of us is for that which is transcendent, for that which is immortal – and not for temporal goods. And on this night/day that longing is fulfilled by a tiny babe, born in Bethlehem.
- Jesus comes to heal us of our sins, to save us from eternal perdition, and to make us holy so that we can live with Him forever in the joys of eternity.
- Let us see in Him the only answer to the deepest desires of our hearts, and not put our hopes in the things of the world.
- Come, let us adore Him: the Word-Made-Flesh. May we hold Him as the pearl of great price in this life, and may we be joined with Him for eternity.