

Merry fifth day of Christmas! We continue with the 12 Days of Christmas which began on December 25th and will last until January 6th when we observe the Feast of the Epiphany. Today's Gospel lesson is the same lesson that is appointed for Christmas Day from John chapter 1 in which we are told the joyful news that "The Word became flesh." These three words hold tremendous meaning and words themselves are very important...words matter.

Have you ever been singing a song and thought you knew the words, only to realize later you had been singing the wrong words? It can completely change the meaning of the song, for better or worse. In the top 20 most commonly misheard song lyrics, number 9 is from the Eurythmic's song, "Sweet Dreams" – while Annie is singing, "Sweet dreams are made of this" people often think she's singing, "Sweet dreams are made of cheese." (And that just doesn't work.) Michael Green shares a similar Christmas story of a little brother and sister singing their favorite Christmas carols in church. The boy concluded "Silent Night" with the words, "Sleep in heavenly beans." "No," his sister corrected, "not beans, peas." Words matter.

All of my children have moved beyond the phase of learning to talk -but they're still learning new words all the time and it's a joy when my 6 year old hears a new word and asks, "Mom, what does that word mean?" and then I have the pleasure of introducing him to a brand new concept....because words are fascinating. And now both my youngest will learn a word for something and correct me when I use a different word for that same thing – they struggle to understand how two words can have the same meaning or have a similar meaning in a different context. Words are tricky. And although words will always fall short of describing things perfectly - they're one of the few tools we have to communicate, and so we must try.

This is certainly true of the Gospel message – we are trying to use words in the Gospel today to describe something far beyond human language – we're trying to talk about God and the incarnation -

and words can't quite capture it- but we need to try anyway.

Today the word that John uses to describe God in Christ is the term, "the Word." He writes, "The Word was made flesh." "The Word" is translated from the Greek word, "Logos." Logos is where we get our English word "logic" from and the ancient Greek philosophers developed it to refer to the sense of a universal divine reason immanent in nature and a unifying and revelatory force – the supreme master-plan that coordinates the entire changing universe. Logos is an incredible word that English just simply doesn't capture.

So what concepts do we have that will help us understand? Honestly, the ancient Greek conception of the Logos has some striking similarities to the Star Wars' concept of the Force. And if you haven't seen The Rise of Skywalker yet, you'll be interested to know that some new information is revealed about how the Force works (but I won't spoil it for you now). Here is how the Star Wars site defines the Force: The Force is a mysterious energy field created by life that binds the galaxy together. (I have read that George Lucas was actually influenced by the Greek concept of Logos when conceiving of the Force for the story.) Of course, John is taking us several steps beyond the concept of the "the Force" because in his philosophical mind- the Force is not impersonal but personal, and has consciousness. There is purpose here.

And then John takes us one more step and then does something absolutely extraordinary theologically – he tells us that the Logos has taken on human flesh as a human being. In the Greek, the word "flesh" here is "sarx" and sarx includes the blood and tissue and bones of the body, but it also includes the whole being, including the mind, and personhood itself. Again, our English word doesn't capture it. Sarx encompasses everything about being human.

So John is saying that the Logos became fully and totally human-became sarx. The Logos has become

enfleshed as a human person and his name is Jesus. So, Jesus isn't just a Divine brain with a façade or veil of humanity over him, God in Jesus became completely human in every way, shape, and form, right down to conception and birth as a little baby with unique character traits and all the fullness of personhood with opinions, feelings, and likes and dislikes. Of course, more importantly, the Word, the Logos becoming flesh means that all the fullness of the Divine met all the fullness of humanity in Jesus. So John's statement is mind-blowing...and beyond our words. In fact, it has been noted the Incarnation is a paradox. And still we claim that Logos became sarx: the Word became flesh.

the God - the Logos. We matter so much that the Word became flesh. Happy Christmas!

And what does this matter? It matters because the Incarnation opens up for us the possibility of union between the divine and the human. Christ is God's Logos, serving as a bridge between God and humanity. When the Logos was born as a little baby that Christmas night, it was to reveal the depth of love and concern God has for humanity, to show us what God is really like, and to connect to us and be with us. We understand that we too have a spark of the Logos within us. Of course, concept of the Logos is too big and vast for any of us to comprehend -and so we needed a mediator, a translator of the message of God's love and God's will. It is one thing to say, "God is love" – and it is another to know God's love and to see that love in action in a life: in the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And then recognize it in our own lives and the lives of those around us. Because love, as my Bible professor always told us, is an action verb. God is love and that love took action and was revealed fully when the Word became flesh. Words matter.

The Christmas message always comes back to this: God is love and God loves us. Simone Weil writes, "God's love for us is not the reason for which we should love God. God's love for us is the reason for us to love ourselves."

You and I matter. We matter to God. Words matter. And we get to share in the life and love of