



Arise

A reflection / letter to foster pastoral and spiritual growth
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Our God becomes flesh



*While all things
were in quiet silence,
And that night was
in the midst of
her swift course,
Your Almighty Word,
O Lord,
Leaped down
out of thy royal throne,*

Alleluia!

~ And the Word became flesh and lived among us. *John 1:14*

We Christians tend to sentimentalize the Christmas story. And yet the whole message is there beneath the charming Christmas pageants with the cute little girls holding baby dolls and boys dressed up in bathrobes as St. Joseph. Yes, it's all there. Now let's think about what it *means*.

John sums the whole story in one sentence! ~ saying "*the Word became*

divine character and has done this from the beginning: 'You will be like God.'

Have we really understood the impoverishment that Christ endured? Everything was taken from him during the passion, even the love that drove him to the cross . . . His heart gave out and a feeling of utter helplessness came over him. Truly he emptied himself . . . He became utterly poor. [Thus] he accepted our humanity, he took on and endured our lot, he stepped down from his divinity. He came to us where we really are ~ with all our broken dreams and lost hopes, with the meaning of existence slipping through our fingers. He came and stood with us, struggling with his whole heart to have us say 'yes' to our innate poverty. [God's faithfulness] to us is what gives us the courage to be true to ourselves. And the legacy of God's total commitment to humankind, the proof of God's fidelity to our poverty, is the Cross. [The Cross is the sacrament, the sign] that one human being remained true to his own humanity, that he accepted it in full obedience."

Thus each of us has the opportunity to embrace our poverty, or as I have been saying in *Arise* for the past two years we have the opportunity to accept whatever brokenness shows up in our own lives and find the treasure buried within.

But this goes against the grain for us in American life. We are told to keep up with the Joneses. And so we strive for power, prestige, possessions. This is not the way of Jesus. And this cannot be the way of a true follower of Christ. Our attitude is to be Christ's. And once we have embraced our poverty, our weakness, and not denied our brokenness we will realize that we, too, will be exalted as Jesus was (is.) (*Realize that the word "Humility" comes from the word "Humus" ~ "dirt"*)

That, my dear readers, is the meaning of the doctrine of the Incarnation, of the Christmas story. To get to heaven we have to get down and dirty first. *Interesting isn't it?*

May we finally get the message that Jesus came to teach us: that accepting the poverty of our human condition is the only way that we can become like God, like Him.

Metz would put it this way:

***Poverty of spirit is the meeting point of heaven and earth,
the mysterious place where God and humanity
encounter each other, the point where infinite
mystery meets concrete existence.***

