

## **Incarnation now!**

This morning we gather to remember and celebrate the incarnation – the time when God became human. We remember the baby Jesus coming out of the womb, wet, bloody and probably yelling; and his young mother wrapping him tightly and placing him in the manger.

Sometimes I realize that I'm thinking of Jesus the Christ as being a part of God that somehow got detached. Rather like when you take a snip of a geranium and plant it and it grows roots and becomes a new plant – it's got exactly the same DNA as the first plant because it is that plant but now it is separate. In a similar way I sometimes think that when Christ became human in Jesus he became detached from the rest of God. Yet what we know about the Godhead is that God is three persons in one, totally indivisible. So the baby in the feeding trough is not just Jesus the Christ but also God the Creator, also the Holy Spirit.

No part of God is held back. God is totally present in this squirming little guy. God is totally present within creation because God has become a creature. God has become a creature and God as creature is lying in a feeding trough. God is come to feed us. God has come to give God's life so that we might flourish.

The ancient people thought that pelicans fed their young by pulling flesh out of their own chests. So Jesus is sometimes depicted as a pelican – feeding us with his own flesh.

Today we are going to enjoy eucharist together. This strange time of abstinence, of receiving only with our eyes, in our own individual homes, makes these days when we can receive together in person even more precious. Because in this sacrament of bread, and usually wine, God comes to us in matter – in material form. God comes to us in bread which is made from grain that God grew and farmers tended, and which has been baked by human bakers.

The bread itself is a cooperation between God and human – and we get to receive it as a sign of God – every person of God – Creator, Word and Spirit – coming into us. Becoming incarnate in us. As the Iona prayer says, “as the bread and wine which we now eat and drink are changed into us, may we be changed again into you, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh, loving and caring in the world”

We do not do this as individuals – we always gather in community - because God’s gift is not just to us as individuals but to the whole human race. "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" is not an exclusive statement about a special club of humans whom God favors. No, it’s a wonderful affirmation that she favors all of humanity. So the gift of God incarnating through Mary, and the gift of God incarnating in us through the sign of the bread is God incarnating for the whole human race. And what’s more, we humans are the representatives of creation.

So we celebrate the Eucharist – which literally means Thanksgiving – we celebrate the Great Thanksgiving on behalf of humanity and on behalf of creation. This sharing in the Body of Christ is a sharing in the incarnation because we, the church, the people of God are now the ongoing incarnation – the body through which God chooses to manifest in the world.

Thus we live into the mystical union expressed by Jesus in John 14, “because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”

Today we celebrate the birth of a baby in Bethlehem but it is much more – we celebrate God here and now giving life to us and through us to the cosmos.