



**Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue
in the City of New York**

The Reverend Andrew C. Mead, OBE, DD, *Rector*
John Scott, LVO, D. Mus., *Organist and Director of Music*
www.SaintThomasChurch.org

Thursday, December 25, 2003
Christmas Day

*Solemn Eucharist of the Nativity
at 11am*

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A Sermon by
The Reverend Andrew C. Mead, Rector
on
Saint John 1:1-14

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CHRISTMAS DAY 2003

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.

When God began creation, he spoke: "Let there be light..." Just so, as the epistle for Christmas Day declares, he spoke to his people through his prophets, until latterly and finally he spoke through his Son. Thus the Gospel for Christmas Day, the prologue to the Gospel according to Saint John, says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made by him...And [then] ...The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Our celebration of Christmas here at Saint Thomas Church has been rich and full. We have heard the choirboys twice sing Britten's *Ceremony of Carols* and the full choir twice sing Handel's *Messiah*. We have had a Christmas Carol-sing for the community and two magnificent services of Nine Lessons and Carols tracing the whole history of salvation. We have shared the Christmas story with the children, blessed the crèche and placed the figure of the Christ Child in the manger. Finally last night at midnight we celebrated the first Eucharist of the Feast, the Christ-Mass. This morning we are more reflective as we hear the apostles explain the meaning of it all: The Word, which is God, was made flesh and dwelt among us.

The New Testament Greek term for "word" is *logos*. *Logos* is both the thought and the expression. The word "logical" stems from this root. A commentator remarks: "A word with a clear meaning is a *logos*; a scream is not. The idea behind that clear word is a *logos*; the panic impelling the scream is not."¹

The Word expresses all that God is. He fills creation with God's goodness and providence. How much of God is involved in this plan? God is completely in the Plan all the way. God is the Plan. God is the Fulfillment of the Plan. Not only was the Word with God, but the Word was God. When the Word takes on our flesh, our very nature, he discloses in human form everything that God is. The way Jesus Christ lives illustrates the mind of God. The manger leads to the cross. The whole way was one of love for us. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, who is

¹ Robin Griffith-Jones in *The Church Times*, December 19/26, 2003, p. 14.

God's first and last Word. As the epistle puts it, Christ is the express image of God's Person; the very stamp of God's nature. The Word addresses us here in language we can understand; more than that, we encounter him in an image and likeness that we ourselves share.

The image we bear, however, has been marred; distorted by the sin we have inherited and in which we have personally taken part. Christ came to save us from this predicament and to show us what true human life is. It is not that we are merely human and that Christ is superhuman. It rather that Christ is fully and truly human and that we have become dehumanized, distracted from being the human beings we were meant to be. I believe that is why Jesus referred to himself most frequently as the Son of Man. He was indeed the Son of God, begotten of his Father before all time. But he was born for us in time, under Caesar Augustus in Bethlehem. He was born to be the Son of Man. And the Son of Man died, having lived victoriously for us, so victoriously that God raised him from death, in the time of Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem, revealing him as the Son of God.

God's Christmas present to us is his Word made flesh, his Son. It was misunderstood by Herod at the beginning, whose murderous intent for Christ was frustrated by God until Christ's hour came before Caesar in Christ's passion. It took a while, and a lot of agony, for Christ's disciples to realize what a gift they had been given. It often takes us quite a while, and some pain, to realize it as well. But if we stay with Christ, and give ourselves to him, and persevere to the end – as our patron Saint Thomas did – then we will reach Easter, and be able to confess (as Thomas did), My Lord and my God. What Saint John declared concerning the Word at the start will be ours, personally, at the finish. May you have a holy and truly joyous Christ-Mass.

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.