



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

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**[www.SaintThomasChurch.org](http://www.SaintThomasChurch.org)**

**Sunday, December 25, 2005**  
*Christmas Day*

*The Solemn Eucharist of the Nativity  
at 11am*

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A Sermon by  
The Reverend Andrew C. Mead, Rector  
on  
Hebrews 1:1-12

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*CHRIST IS INCARNATE – HERE, NOW*

*He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

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

Up to this point in our Christmas celebrations, we have concentrated our attention on the details of Jesus' Nativity, principally as told by Saint Luke and Saint Matthew. This morning, we are taken behind the scenes to the eternal purposes of God which express themselves in the narrative. Let us, in the quiet of this beautiful Christmas morning Eucharist, reflect on these purposes as set forth in today's Epistle and Gospel lessons.

We are more familiar with the Gospel, the grand prologue of the Gospel of Saint John the Evangelist: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him (the Word) and without him was not anything made that was made. But today's Epistle reading, the equally grand prologue of the Epistle to the Hebrews, just as clearly states that the Son is the reflection of the Father's glory, the express image of his person who bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power.

This Son, says the Gospel, was made flesh and dwelt among us, so that we can behold his glory, glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Our beholding is by the eye of faith. At the end of his time on earth, Jesus was asked by his disciple Philip, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied." Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and still you do not know me? He who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" (Jn 14:8-9) The *seeing* of the Father comes by the perception of *who Jesus is*.

This brings me to my first of two points. Let us understand that in Jesus Christ God has taken our human nature, our very flesh, upon himself; in order to address us, to speak in terms we can grasp, to disclose the glory of God to us. But there is a paradox in this: He was in the world, and the world was made by him, yet the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. By and large, he was rejected, and in the end, crucified. But to those who receive him, who believe in his name, he gives power to become [in him] children of God.

And this brings me to my second point. Christ's rejection, his suffering and death on the cross, was not a mistake. It was foreseen by God. Jesus repeatedly predicted it. In fact, it was necessary. Why? Because the coming of the Son into the world means a confrontation between the goodness of God and the world's fallen-ness; its sin, its ill will, and its death. Thus the Epistle says: When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. In other words, the greatest achievement, the life's work, of the Babe in the manger, is precisely his cross, by which he has reconciled us to God. Just as the Son is nailed there, so he also sits down at the right hand of the Father. As we sing, Christ is born to save.

Our Maker is also our Savior. In making us, he endowed us with free will. He endowed us with free will, because love is free, and he gave us the capacity, like himself, to love. In giving us such a gift, he took the risk that we would decline to use it (as we so often have done). He took the risk that we would not love. The risk involved a terrible price he knew would have to be paid. Since we cannot pay it, he has always known that he would. He is the "Lamb of God" foreordained before the foundation of the world, and he has made good on his destiny. Christmas is the beginning. Good Friday and Easter are the end.

The Church of Jesus is many things. But at the heart of it all is what we are doing this morning – celebrating the Holy Communion. Here, just as our Gospel and Epistle say, the Word is made flesh and dwells among us. God in Christ comes to us, to re-establish communion and fellowship with his creatures who are also his brothers and sisters in the flesh. In doing so he offers not just words, ideas, concepts; but his Real Presence, his very Body and Blood, under the forms of Bread and Wine. This is the same Christ who took flesh in the womb of his mother Mary, who was born in Bethlehem, who grew up in Nazareth, who taught as one with authority, who worked signs and wonders, who called God his own Father, who was betrayed, condemned, made to bear his cross and crucified. This is the same Christ whose tomb was found empty on the third day and who revealed himself alive after his passion; whose wounds Doubting Thomas was invited to touch. This is the Christ who sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Now here he is this Christmas morning, living today in bread and wine: Take, eat; this is my Body...Drink this all of you; this is my Blood. He is here this Christmas morning, in the persons of his brothers and sisters, especially, as he put it, in the "least of these."

Let us draw near with faith, receiving the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was broken for us and his Blood which was shed for us; and let us love one another as he has loved us. In the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.