

Homily for December 25, 1999
Cycle B, Christmas Day Mass

By Father Charles Bowes

Isaiah 52:7-10
Hebrews 1:1-6
John 1:1-18

We are God's Word to the world in which we live.

“In the beginning was the Word...” says John chapter 1, in the Gospel for the Christmas Mass during the day. Words are meant to be read to be taken into our minds and hearts to inform, to comfort, to seek truth, to give life meaning.

More than a billion people, one in six in the world, cannot read words. One billion people will enter the next millennium unable to read a book or even to sign their own names. Two-thirds of the illiterate are women. Forty percent of children of elementary school age in Third-World countries have never attended school or have dropped out before they could read or count. Even in prosperous countries, 15 to 20 percent of students leave school without the literacy skills necessary to provide them with jobs.

Today we praise God that “the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us...” The greatest of blessings is that God's Word came in the flesh to transform our lives, to shine in the darkness of the world, to be the light of the world. The Word made flesh does not have to be “read.” The Word made flesh

can be seen in the actions of those who know the Word through their own reading of sacred scriptures, through the Eucharist and other sacraments of the Church, through prayer and praise.

If we only hear this message as words, we miss the true message of Christmas. The Word *became* flesh in Jesus. The Word *becomes* flesh in you and in me. And we are to spread that Word in works and love in our families, our communities, our workplaces. Jesus is born in you and in me in the new millennium and thus the Word is made flesh again. Jesus came from the Father “filled with enduring love.” That love is spilled into our lives. We are called to share this gift with the world – nourished as we are by the glorified flesh and blood of Jesus Christ – we become what we receive at this holy table and in this gathering.

In the church at Mother Teresa of Calcutta's funeral someone displayed a sign with the words: “Works of love are works of peace.” May our words and works bring the Lord's peace to those around us.

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