And the Word Was Made Flesh and Dwelt among Us

As we solemnly celebrate the Christmas Day and greet everyone we meet “Merry Christmas,” let us not forget to reflect the mystery of the Incarnation—the Word becoming flesh. The eternal Word of the Father became flesh and dwelt among us. What a wonderful event to behold! This is a fulfillment of the promise to redeem his people. Isaiah tells us: “the Lord comforts his people, he redeems Jerusalem” (First Reading). God fulfills his promise. “God has spoken to us through his Son, whom he made heir of all things” (Second Reading).

Some points for consideration:

1) God’s Word becoming flesh signifies communion. He allowed himself to be with us. For this we are assured that we are special to him and we are forgiven by him.

2) He could have actualized so many other possibilities to show his love and forgiveness. But he opted to become man, taking up human flesh and blood except sin.

3) The communion that is manifested here is a communion of the divine and the human: divine because he is God, human because he truly became man.

4) The Incarnation is also indwelling of God in humanity. “He dwelt among us”—here we see God journeying with humanity, with his people. We are courageous because we are not alone in our journey. He accompanies us all throughout our pilgrimage to the Eternal Father.

As we celebrate Christmas today, let us be gifts to others, just as Christ has been a gift to our faith-lives. Let us accompany one another in this journey to eternal life. A Blessed Christmas to one and all!

Bishop Oscar Jaime Florencio
Military Ordinary of the Philippines

Let us pray to the Heavenly Father, who has revealed himself through his Son Jesus. May we be conscious of the gift of salvation that he has given us, so that we too may become a sign of his Son’s presence—a contemporary witness of God’s presence in our midst.
Gloria
All — Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect
P — Let us pray. (Pause)
O God, who wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and still more wonderfully restored it, grant, we pray, that we may share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
All — Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading [Is 52:7-10] (Sit)
The watchmen and the inhabitants of Jerusalem shout for joy at the Lord's coming to restore his broken people. Today, we also celebrate God's coming to his people through the birth of the Savior.

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

HOW BEAUTIFUL upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation, and saying to Zion, "Your God is King!"

Hark! Your sentinels raise a cry, together they shout for joy, for they see directly, before their eyes, the Lord restoring Zion. Break out together in song, O ruins of Jerusalem! For the Lord comforts his people, he redeems Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm in the sight of all the nations; all the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God.

— The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 98)
R — All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

1. Sing to the Lord a new song,/ for he has done wondrous deeds:/ his right hand has won victory for him,/ his holy arm. (R)
2. The Lord has made his salvation known:/ in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice./ He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness/ toward the house of Israel. (R)
3. All the ends of the earth have seen/ the salvation by our God./ Sing joyfully to the Lord,/ all you lands:/ break into song; sing praise. (R)
4. Sing praise to the Lord/ with the harp,/ with the harp and melodious song./ With trumpets and the sound of the horn/ sing joyfully before the King, the Lord. (R)

Second Reading [Heb 1:1-6]
The birth of Christ marks the fullness of God's communication with us. In ages past, God spoke through the prophets. Now he speaks to us through his Son.

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews

BROTHERS AND SISTERS: In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he has spoken to us through the Son, whom he made heir of
all things and through whom he created the universe, who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word. When he had accomplished purification from sins, he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, as far superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

For to which of the angels did God ever say: You are my son: this day I have begotten you? Or again: I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me? And again, when he leads the firstborn into the world, he says: Let all the angels of God worship him.

— The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

Alleluia (Stand)

All — Alleluia, alleluia. A holy day has dawned upon us. Come, you nations, and adore the Lord. For today a great light has come upon the earth. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel [Jn 1:1-18]

P — A reading from the holy Gospel according to John
All — Glory to you, O Lord.

IN THE BEGINNING was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him.

But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man’s decision but of God.

And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth. John testified to him and cried out, saying, “This was he of whom I said, ‘The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.’ From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father’s side, has revealed him.

— The Gospel of the Lord.
All — Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (Sit)

Profession of Faith (Stand)

All — I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (all kneel at the words that follow up to and including Incarnate) AND BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS INCARNATE of the Virgin Mary and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

P — On this holy day, let us present our petitions to the almighty Father who loves us as his children in his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Full of confidence, we pray:

R — Lord, bless your people!

P — That the world in agony, torn by division and strife, be filled with tidings of comfort and joy. We pray:

R — That families throughout the world become a dwelling place of your incarnate Son, Jesus our Emmanuel. We pray:

P — That our religious and political leaders humble themselves as Jesus humbled himself, and be responsible stewards of your people. We pray:

R — That the Good News of your coming resound throughout the whole of the world so that people will hear the comforting words of hope and the promise of salvation. We pray:

P — That your light shine on those who still live in darkness, whose eyes are blinded by jealousy, hatred, and the lure of power and money. We pray:

R — Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions (pause), we pray:

P — Father, hear our prayers and make this Christmas celebration a moment of thanksgiving and sharing.

This we ask through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.
Presentation of the Gifts (Stand)

P — Pray, brethren...
All — May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P — Make acceptable, O Lord, our oblation on this solemn day, when you manifested the reconciliation that makes us wholly pleasing in your sight and inaugurated for us the fullness of divine worship.

Through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

Preface II of the Nativity of the Lord

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.
P — Lift up your hearts.
All — We lift them up to the Lord.
P — Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All — It is right and just.
P — It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

For on the feast of this awe-filled mystery, though invisible in his own divine nature, he has appeared visibly in ours; and begotten before all ages, he has begun to exist in time; so that, raising up in himself all that was cast down, he might restore unity to all creation and call straying humanity back to the heavenly Kingdom.

And so, with all the Angels, we praise you, as in joyful celebration, we acclaim:

All — Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. (Kneel)

Acclamation (Stand)

All — We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord’s Prayer

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.

Solemn Blessing

P — Bowed down for the blessing. (Pause)
All — May the God of infinite goodness, who by the Incarnation of his Son has driven darkness from the world and by that glorious Birth has illumined this most holy day, have mercy on my people and bring them to your loving light.

All — Amen.

P — May God, who wills that the great joy of his Son’s saving Birth be announced to shepherds by the Angel, fill your minds with the gladness he gives and make you heralds of his Gospel.
All — Amen.

P — And may God, who by the Incarnation brought together the earthly and heavenly realm, fill you with the gift of his peace and favor and make you sharers with the Church in heaven.
All — Amen.

P — And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (†) and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.
All — Amen.

Dismissal

P — Go forth, the Mass is ended.
All — Thanks be to God.