



Second Week after Christmas: 2nd/3rd Jan 2022

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

“This is the only Son, who is nearest to the Father’s heart who has made Him known.”

The news on Christmas Day of the launch of the James Web Telescope to study galaxy, star and planet formation in the universe, led to questions about life beyond the earth. How would/might new forms of life impact on the teaching of the Church about the coming of Jesus, and our ideas about God/s and Creation. Interestingly NASA had enlisted 24 theologians to take part in a study at the Centre for Theological Enquiry at Princeton University in New Jersey with a view to building “bridges of understanding by convening theologians, scientists, scholars and policy makers to think together – and inform public thinking – on global concerns.” Dr Andrew Davison, a Priest and Theologian at the University of Cambridge, is one of the Theologians, and he is reported as saying “Non-religious people seem to overestimate the challenges that religious people...would experience if faced with evidence of alien life.”

The Head of the Vatican Observatory said recently that there is no conflict between believing in God and the possibility of “extraterrestrial brothers” perhaps more evolved than humans. There is nothing in Scripture that says there can’t be some form of life elsewhere. What we do know is that Jesus came in space and time and history to save sinful humanity.

The communication of this central Truth of our Faith and its implications for all aspects of life has been at the heart of evangelization from the earliest days. How it is done comes to the fore in the Gospel for the Second Sunday after Christmas. The Gospel is taken from St John who is speaking to the Greek Gentile world of the first Century A.D. At Christmas Midnight Mass the Gospel was from St Luke Chapter 2 and these words were central in the appearance of the Angel to the Shepherds: “I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the Town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”

On the Second Sunday after Christmas we have these words in St John’s Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God...The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory.”

John’s prologue (Chapter 1:1-18) read on the Second Sunday after Christmas uses the Greek “Logos” or “Word” taken from Ancient Greek Philosophy to describe Jesus. It was similar to the Hebrew concept of Wisdom, Gods companion and helper in Creation. A Greek Philosopher, Philo, merged these two themes, and the Gospel adapted his description of the Logos or Word, applying it to Jesus, the incarnation of the Logos.

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The Church, through its great teachers and theologians has continued to speak to the world of its day using language that can be understood by those coming from different perspectives and mindsets to the issues that face all humanity. Such has been our experience in more recent times with the approach to the great issues tackled in Catholic Social Teaching such as “Climate Change” approached by Pope Francis in his letter “Laudato Si” and the conflict between people of different Ideologies and Faiths in “Fratelli Tutti” (we are all brothers and sisters).

Joseph Pollard in his book “Finding Light” has this challenging paragraph in his Reflection for the Second Sunday after Christmas: “trite theology and panic prayers are not worthy of Christ and the Christian Faith in an educated and questioning age. All of us need to prioritise Jesus, the Word of God to us, in our everyday agenda, and we need a seriously reflective engagement with the Gospels about the Word, so that we may know what it is to be human and how one achieves optimum personhood. Only then will we have an adult grasp on this “Word [that] became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” (John 1:14) Only then will we have fitting adult experience that parallels John’s. We ought to be able to say what he was able to say of himself and of the other disciples: “of Christ’s fullness we have all had our share, love following upon love.” (John 1:16).

There are many ways to respond to this challenge in prayer, reading and reflection. I recommend Bethany Mulvey’s weekly notes for the Year of the Word on the Sunday Scripture readings which came about because she wanted to help all those who wish to understand the Scriptures better in the light of Church Teaching. You can reach Bethany on: bethanymulvey55@gmail.com.

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