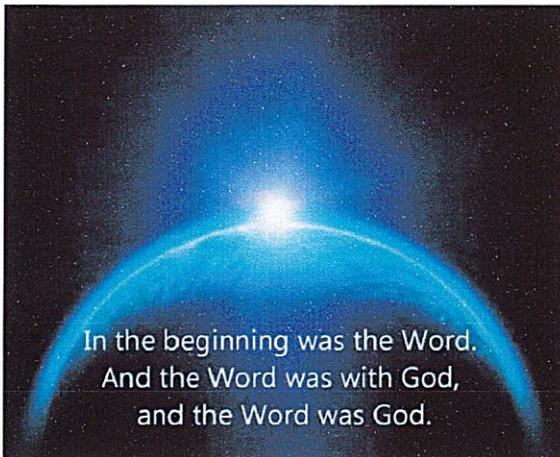




# Our Faith on Sunday

## GOSPEL REFLECTION

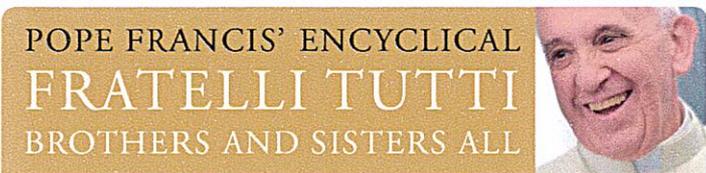


Among the many claims of Christianity which takes our breath away is the astounding affirmation we find in the opening of John's gospel: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1,14). How could God become man?

And if he became man, how could he still be God? Not only did he become man, he became mortal. He died, and not just any death: death on a cross; a condemned criminal crying out in what seems to be pure human desperation: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 27,46). When we celebrate Christmas, this is what we mean: God who

loves us so much that in the words of St Paul he "emptied himself" (Phil. 2,7) and became "sin" (2 Cor 5,21). St. Athanasius writes that "God became man so that man might become God". Jesus came on earth with a return ticket to the

Father. And in his journey back he takes all of us along with him. That is our true destiny as human beings. But it is not just a matter of waiting for our death. When we pray "on earth as in heaven" what else could it mean than that we asking for the life of heaven to be lived here and now? And what is that heavenly life? If God is love, how could it be anything else than what Jesus commanded us to do: "Love one another as I have loved you".



## Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter DILEXIT NOS

### THE DEATH PENALTY

265. From the earliest centuries of the Church, some were clearly opposed to capital punishment. Lactantius, for example, held that "there ought to be no exception at all; that it is always unlawful to put a man to death".<sup>252</sup> Pope Nicholas I urged that efforts be made "to free from the punishment of death not only each of the innocent, but all the guilty as well".<sup>253</sup> During the trial of the murderers of two priests, Saint Augustine asked the judge not to take the life of the assassins with this argument: "We do not object to your depriving these wicked men of the freedom to commit further crimes. Our desire is rather that justice be satisfied without the taking of their lives or the maiming of their bodies in any part. And, at the same time, that by the coercive measures provided by the law, they be turned from their irrational fury to the calmness of men of sound mind, and from their evil deeds to some useful employment. This too is considered a condemnation, but who does not see that, when savage violence is restrained and remedies meant to produce repentance are provided, it should be considered a benefit rather than a mere punitive measure... Do not let the atrocity of their sins feed a desire for vengeance, but desire instead to heal the wounds which those deeds have inflicted on their souls".<sup>254</sup>

252. *Divinae Institutiones* VI, 20, 17: PL 6, 708.

253. *Epistola 97* (*Responsa ad consulta Bulgarorum*), 25: PL 119, 991. "ipsi (Christo) non solum innoxios quosque, verum etiam et nocuos a mortis exitio satagite cunctos eruere..."

254. *Epistola ad Marcellinum* 133, 1.2: PL 33, 509.

Christ asks you never to be ashamed to tell others, with all due discretion and respect, about your friendship with him. He asks that you dare to tell others how good and beautiful it is that you found him. "Everyone who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven" (Mt 10:32). For a heart that loves, this is not a duty but an irrepressible need: "Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16). "Within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot" (Jer 20:9). In communion of service.

We should not think of this mission of sharing Christ as something only between Jesus and me. Mission is experienced in fellowship with our communities and with the whole Church. If we turn aside from the community, we will be turning aside from Jesus. If we turn our back on the community, our friendship with Jesus will grow cold. This is a fact, and we must never forget it. Love for the brothers and sisters of our communities – religious, parochial, diocesan and others is a kind of fuel that feeds our friendship with Jesus. Our acts of love for our brothers and sisters in community may well be the best and, at times, the only way that we can witness to others our love for Jesus Christ. He himself said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35).



**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

**When a profound silence covered all things and night was in the middle of its course, your all-powerful Word, O Lord, bounded from heaven's royal throne.**

Wis 18: 14-15

you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.****COLLECT**

Almighty ever-living God, splendour of faithful souls, graciously be pleased to fill the world with your glory, and show yourself to all peoples by the radiance of your light. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

**FIRST READING**

A reading from the Book of Sirach.

Sirach 24:1-2, 8-12

Wisdom will praise herself and will boast in the midst of her people. In the assembly of the Most High she will open her mouth, and in the presence of his forces she will boast: 'Then the Creator of all things commanded me, and the one who created me gave my tent a resting place. And he said, "Make your dwelling in Jacob and in Israel receive your inheritance." From eternity, in the beginning, he created me, and for eternity I shall not cease to exist. In the holy tabernacle I ministered before him, and so I was established in Zion. In the beloved city likewise he gave me a resting place, and in Jerusalem was my dominion. So I took root in an honoured people, in the portion of the Lord, his inheritance.'

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.****PSALM**

Psalm 147:12-13. 14-15. 19-20. R. John 1:14

**R. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.***or:***Alleluia.**

O Jerusalem, glorify the Lord!

O Zion, praise your God!

He has strengthened the bars of your gates;  
he has blessed your children within you.

He established peace on your borders;  
he gives you your fill of finest wheat.  
He sends out his word to the earth,  
and swiftly runs his command.

He reveals his word to Jacob;  
to Israel, his decrees and judgements.  
He has not dealt thus with other nations;  
he has not taught them his judgements.

**SECOND READING**

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give

**ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL****Alleluia, alleluia.**

Cf. 1 Timothy 3:16

**Glory to you, O Christ, proclaimed among the nations.****Glory to you, O Christ, believed in throughout the world.****Alleluia.****GOSPEL**

John 1:1-18

The Lord be with you.

**And with your spirit.**

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

**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 were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness about him, and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me."

**R.** For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only begotten God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

**R.**

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.****PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS****R.**

Sanctify, O Lord, the offerings we make on the Nativity of your Only Begotten Son, for by it you show us the way of truth and promise the life of the heavenly Kingdom. Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.****COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

Cf. Jn 1: 12

**To all who would accept him, he gave the power to become children of God.**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Lord our God, we humbly ask you, that, through the working of this mystery, our offences may be cleansed and our just desires fulfilled. Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**