

Thoughts on the Daily Word

*Christmas Octave. Wednesday 25th December. Christmas Mass of Day.
Readings: Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm: 98; Hebrews 1:1-6; Gospel: John 1:1-18.*

We have four Masses over this amazing festival. Only once did I have the privilege of celebrating all four Masses. It was a moving experience as the drama unfolded. Ever since I have felt sad that our parishioners don't experience the unfolding drama over the evening, night, and morning. The readings take us to the centre of the mystery of the Incarnation. Each one engages the four stages of the mystery. In the first reading, from Matthew, we are placed into the whole history of God's People. In the second the story of the birth unfolds in the context of the whole world, Rome, and Caesar Augustus. In the third we get down and dirty with the shepherds, dodgy characters in those days, a real testing time for Mary who now must ponder these things. The fourth is decisive, the child is revealed, the Word had become real and among us, to be seen and believed, job done! In the Vigil we enter the agony of God's People on their journey of liberation, an Exodus from slavery to freedom. At Midnight, in a cave in Bethlehem, the agony of a young woman, probably terrified, survival in childbirth was vanishingly slim in those circumstances. At Dawn shepherds turn up with amazing stories, all are astonished, and Mary is left to ponder and reflect just as she had with the angel who began this extraordinary journey. The liberation goes on as Mary continues to say 'yes'. At Daytime the Plan, or Word, is revealed, the Plan becomes flesh and all of us are to become children of God. As the Fathers of the Church said, 'God became Human so that Humans could become Divine'! The Exodus is complete.