

Living the Word: Isaiah 52.7-10

'Break forth together into singing, you waste paces of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem,' says Isaiah in the Old Testament reading appointed for Christmas morning. The Good News announced to the Shepherds on the hillside above Bethlehem is a fulfilment of this very prophecy. The Lord has indeed 'bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations' but strangely so, not by coming in power but in humility. To bare his holy arm means not taking up arms but in opening them wide, as an infant in perfect vulnerability, and later as a man in undefended love for the salvation of the world. To come in humility in this way leads inevitably to the Roman cross of Golgotha, for God knows no other way than the way of love.

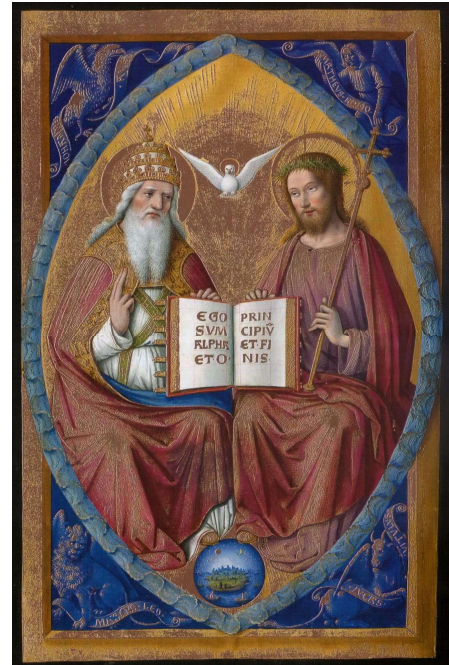
From the Fathers:

From Sermons, by St Leo the Great (400-61, Bishop of Rome, theologian)

Dearly beloved, today our Saviour is born; let us rejoice. Sadness should have no place on the birthday of life! The fear of death has been swallowed up; life brings us joy with the promise of eternal happiness. No one is shut out from this joy; all share the same reason for rejoicing. Our Lord, victor over sin and death, finding no man free from sin, came to free us all. Let the saint rejoice as he sees the palm of victory at hand. Let the sinner be glad as he receives the offer of forgiveness. Let the pagan take courage as he is summoned to life. In the fullness of time, chosen in the unfathomable depths of God's wisdom, the Son of God took for himself our common humanity in order to reconcile with its creator. He came to overthrow the devil, the origin of death, in that very nature by which he had overthrown mankind. And so at the birth of our Lord the angels sing in joy: Glory to God in the highest, and they proclaim peace to men of good will as they see the heavenly Jerusalem being built from all the nations of the world. When the angels on high are so exultant at this marvellous work of God's goodness, what joy should it not bring to the lowly hearts of men?

25th December 2023

Christmas Day



St John the Evangelist is depicted in iconography as an eagle because his Gospel soars high. He truly gives us the widest theological horizon in which to understand the incarnation of the Divine Logos. The Prologue to the Fourth Gospel is John's great hymn to the incarnation. The Prologue reaches its climax in v.14, 'and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.' What is the Word that was made flesh? We express our inmost selves - our feelings and thoughts - in words. This short commentary is trying (poorly) to express a theological truth using words; but only God is able to express his inmost self perfectly in one great Word, the Logos. No one word can possibly capture or express who we are, yet God, who knows and who loves himself perfectly, is able to express himself perfectly and completely in the Divine Logos. It is this Word of the Eternal Father who, although begotten before all worlds, becomes flesh in the womb of the Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary and on Christmas Day is born into the world in Bethlehem of Judea. He is God, the wisdom, power and love of the Father.

Today's Gospel: St. John 1: 1-14