

## From the Fathers

*From a sermon of Saint Leo the Great, pope*

The Son of God who was in the beginning with God, through whom all things were made, without whom nothing was made, became man to free him from eternal death. He stooped down to take up our lowliness without loss to his own glory. He remained what he was; he took up what he was not. He wanted to join the very nature of a servant to that nature in which he is equal to God the Father. He wanted to unite both natures in an alliance so wonderful that the glory of the greater would not annihilate the lesser, nor the taking up of the lower diminish the greatness of the higher.

What belongs to each nature is preserved intact and meets the other in one person: lowliness is taken up by greatness, weakness by power, mortality by eternity. To pay the debt of our human condition, a nature incapable of suffering is united to a nature capable of suffering, and true God and true man are forged into the unity that is the Lord. This was done to make possible the kind of remedy that fitted our human need: one and the same mediator between God and men able to die because of one nature, able to rise again because of the other.

And so at the birth of our Lord, the angels sing in joy: Glory to God in the highest, and they proclaim peace to his people on earth as they see the heavenly Jerusalem being built from all the nations of the world. If 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?

## Elements of the Mass: 'Behold the Lamb of God'

The chant 'O Lamb of God' was originally a Syrian custom introduced into the Roman Rite around the year 700, and was derived from St John the Baptist's proclamation of Jesus in John 1.36. The invitation to communion said by the Priest 'Behold the Lamb of God...' begins with John's words, and the people's response 'Lord I am not worthy...' echoes the words of the Roman centurion in Matthew 8 when he asked Jesus to heal his son. The origins of both parts have been emphasised in the new translation of the Roman Missal (2011). Together, they remind us just who it is who is on the altar, and how privileged we are to receive him 'under our roof' unworthy though we may be.

16<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Sixth Sunday after Trinity

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Our Lord taught in parables, designed to catch the imagination and challenge us. A parable is literally a 'thing thrown in the way.' Jesus used everyday things familiar to his listeners - seed sowing, mustard seeds, fishing, baking, but with a twist that often confused his hearers. Sometimes Jesus gave further teaching to the Twelve, (Matt 13:37) but parables can defy exact analysis. Even detailed examination doesn't always offer a full explanation. Jesus invites listeners to 'grasp,' not analyse, these parables, which often do not have just one meaning. Jesus said he was communicating truths kept secret from the foundation of the world, (Matt 13:3) but he warns us to be careful not to confuse the good with the bad. History shows many thought they understood him, but were wrong. (Matt 13:29) Following Jesus is sometimes presented today as an emotional experience: "Believe in Jesus and you'll feel better and all your problems will disappear." But understanding the Gospel is more a process than an event. We need to be taught and the Church is our Teacher, continually nurturing our understanding. The Faith must be taught, and this might take a lifetime, but few of us understand today the way we did twenty years ago. We need to hear Jesus's teaching continually - in Gospel readings at Mass, in sermons and regular study - to grow in understanding.

*Today's Gospel: St. Matthew 13: 1-23*