

Entering Into the Mystery of Incarnation



The Gabriel Project is a national program endorsed by the US Catholic Conference of Bishops as an important pro-life

parish activity that lends spiritual, emotional, and practical support to pregnant women in crisis. On a parish-by-parish basis, women offer them spiritual, emotional, and practical support, including help with rent, clothing, reconciliation with family members, parenting skills, and support for developing breastfeeding abilities.

Following *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, Rev. Msgr. John Perusina of St. Michael Parish in Houston began the Gabriel Project by putting up a sign that said, "If you will have your baby, this parish will help you in every way." The sign still stands.

By the early 90s, the project was well established in the dioceses of Houston-Galveston and Corpus Christi. The Gabriel Project does not limit itself to serving Catholic women. It provides services to all women regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion.

Parishes have trained volunteers who respond to requests and inquiries from pregnant women in crisis. According to Virginia



"... the smallest details of creation are reflected in the Holy Trinity by means of the humanity of Christ, because it is from the same earth that produced them that Christ drew his humanity."

St. Mechtild of Hackeborn
Mystic (1241-1298)

Kaufmann, coordinator for the Gabriel Project at Resurrection Parish in Aptos, CA, each case is unique. Many times the situation requires helping the family to accept and welcome the new child. Volunteers, known as Angels, have also been known to provide childcare and parenting instruction.

As volunteers and new mothers work together, they enter more deeply into the mystery of love and reassurance expressed by the Angel Gabriel when visiting a very young woman who would become the Mother of God.

The Gabriel Project website may be found at:
www.TheGabrielProject.us



The Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery

Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI, links the mystery of the incarnation with the paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ in a YouTube video entitled *Keeping Incarnate THE PASCHAL MYSTERY*.

Fr. Rolheiser makes two important points in this clip from a longer presentation. The first is that the word "was" that we use in the opening of St. John's Gospel, "The Word was with God and Word was God", is not really in past tense in the original common or *Koine* Greek. In English and most western languages we have a past, a present, and a future tense. The tense that is used in the Greek here is called the aorist tense, which is action that began in the past, is continuing in the present, and will continue into the future. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, the
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ASK THEOLOGIKA

NOT SO COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Dear Theologika,
In the new translation of the Nicene Creed at Mass we say that the Word of God “became incarnate of the Virgin Mary.” What does “incarnate” or “incarnation” mean?

Puzzled

Dear Puzzled,
The answer to your question is laid out in two passages from Scripture. The prologue of St. John’s Gospel (“And the Word became flesh and dwelt [literally, pitched His tent] among us.”) and the opening of St. Luke’s Gospel in which the Angel Gabriel announces God’s desire to become one with us and Mary answers “yes” to God’s plan.

God’s fullest and most complete expression of God’s self is the *Logos* – a term we translate as Word. But *logos* in Greek really means the unique quality that makes something what it is. God’s *logos* or Word is that

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fullness of God’s self-disclosure which occasions the Holy Spirit — the infinite love between the Word and the unoriginated Originator, whom Jesus called the Father. This is the one God, the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

When we talk about the mystery of the Incarnation we are reflecting on the perfect union of God’s *logos* with Jesus of Nazareth who, as a result, is fully human and fully divine. This is called the hypostatic union. The Word of God is made flesh and dwells among us.

It is not uncommon in many traditions for gods to have children with humans. The offspring of a god and a human, a demigod, is half human and half godlike. *In the revealed mystery of the Incarnation we are not talking about Jesus as a demigod, as half human and half divine.* Our belief is that Jesus, from the moment of his conception, was both truly human and truly divine. Human nature did not bring down or degrade the divine nature of the Word of God. Instead, the Word of God raised humanity to its fullest potential in Jesus.

Through our baptism into the death and rising of Christ and our anointing in the Spirit, we come to share in this divine life of the Trinity as redeemed humans, caught up in the Trinity of God’s Love. Our new life in Christ leads us to be part and parcel of the Incarnation — the mystery of God’s Word unfolding in our everyday human lives. We celebrate and affirm our life in the Trinity every time we bless ourselves with the sign of the cross.



La Revolución de la Ternura

Mariano Delgado, Miembro de la Academia Europea de las Ciencias y de las Artes ha escrito un comentario sobre la Exhortación Apostólica del Santo Papa Francisco, *La Alegría del Evangelio*. El tema del comentario es el sueño del Papa de que comprendiéramos la encarnación del Hijo de Dios como una invitación a “la revolución de la ternura”. Animados por esa revolución, podríamos anunciar la Buena Nueva, es decir el evangelio, logrando una nueva etapa en el camino de la Iglesia marcada por la alegría del evangelio. Así pasaríamos de una pastoral de mera conservación a una pastoral misionera.

Este tema resuena el espíritu del documento de la V Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano y del Caribe en Aparecida, Brasil en 2007. El origen del sueño del Papa se pone más claro considerando que en ese tiempo, como Arzobispo Jorge Bergoglio de la Argentina, él mismo fue nombrado coordinador de la Conferencia por el Papa Benedicto. *(Sigue en la página 4)*

(Rolheiser cont.)

Septuagint, uses the same verb in the same aorist tense in the opening of the book of Genesis to describe the work of creation. It is a present and future activity as well as something that happened in the past.

The second point Fr. Rolheiser makes is that the same aorist tense is used in telling us about the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ. The past, ongoing, and continuing activity of the Divine Word becoming human also plays out in the death and resurrection of Christ. The continuity and the ongoing nature of the Incarnation and Paschal Mysteries means that we are caught up in them as well. Fr. Rolheiser points out that they are not something to be understood rationally but rather icons to be gazed upon in faith and wonder. Through the icon we are transported into the dimensionless, ever present, Divine NOW.

For a link to the video, visit us at <http://digest.theologika.net>



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Las Posadas – Illustration from an article on traditional celebrations of Christmas in the Southwest
Incarnation puzzle – Kathleen Brewer de Pozos

Las Posadas – Welcoming the Coming of Christ



In Mexico, Central America, and Mexican-American culture, it is customary to prepare for Christmas through nine days of celebration known as “Las Posadas,” literally, “the inns” or “lodgings.” As part of this celebration, a girl and a boy, dressed as Mary and Joseph, go with family and friends from house to house for nine days in a row, singing and asking for shelter. At each house, they are turned away, until on the last night, at the last house, they are welcomed inside and all share in a party.

The song for Las Posadas is sung back and forth by those outside and those inside the home. There are several versions of the words and the tune for the Posada, but the theme is always the same. The Holy Family is traveling, needing shelter, appearing as the stranger. No one is willing to help them. The house is full; strangers can be a danger to the household; it’s late; the claims of those asking for help seem pretty wild. (She’s a queen? Of Heaven? Yeah, right! Why’s she out so late at night and alone?) Then comes the moment of recognition – the visitors are Heaven-sent – and welcome follows, both physically and spiritually, as the visitors enter into our homes and our hearts.

In these last few days before Christmas, whether we celebrate

Collect of the Mass at Dawn

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that, as we are bathed in the new radiance of your incarnate Word, the light of faith, which illumines our minds, may also shine through in our deeds.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
+Amen

with a Posada, a novena, or simply by lighting the candles on our Advent Wreath, it is a time to remember to smile at the stranger, wait our turn patiently in the long lines at the stores, and offer a prayer for peace for ourselves and those around us. After all, who knows when the stranger we encounter will be a visitor from God who will touch our heart and who awaits our loving response.

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Praying with Pope Francis

That the birth of the Redeemer may bring peace and hope to all people of good will.

That parents may be true evangelizers, passing on to their children the precious gift of faith.

