

INCARNATION

THE LESSON: PHILIPPIANS 2

The next section of the Litany that we're looking at is all about *how* it is that we are delivered. Jesus, God the Son, took on human flesh, lived a life of perfect obedience to God, died on the cross, rose again, intercedes for us at the throne of God, and will one day come again in glory! This is our story of deliverance!

The Old Testament is full of passages that recount what God has done for his people. Psalm 105 says, "Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works!" (105: 1-2). In praying through these petitions, we are recalling all that God has done for us and all that he has promised still to do. We pray these words with confidence, knowing that "he who began a good work in us will bring it to completion" (Philippians 1:6).

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By the mystery of thy holy Incarnation... Good Lord, deliver us.

The word "incarnation" literally means "taking on flesh", and it is the word we use to describe one of the great mysteries of our faith: that Jesus, who is fully God, became human. *He became one of us.*

Sometimes when we recount the Christmas story we can get caught up in the amazing pageantry of angels and shepherds and wise men – and lose sight of the heart of what God was doing: what C.S. Lewis called "the grand miracle". He wrote, "The Christian story is precisely the story of one grand miracle... that what is beyond all space and time, what is uncreated, eternal, came into nature, into human nature, descended into His own universe..." St. John's Gospel puts it this way: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (1:1,14).

In a moment we'll take a look at St. Paul's letter to the Philippians, which reflects further on this great mystery.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE "FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES", WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.))

Scripture is filled with prayers and praises in the form of poetry and songs. During this unit, try your hand at song-writing; drawing inspiration from the love God has for you, made evident in the work of Jesus Christ.

Spend some time this week writing your own song of praise inspired by the incarnation.

(Stuck? Spend some time instead reflecting on the words of this hymn penned by Samuel Crossman (1623-1683): "My song is love unknown, My Savior's love to me; Love to the loveless shown, That they might lovely be. O who am I, That for my sake My Lord should take frail flesh, and die?")

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

Almighty God, who hast given us thy only begotten Son to take our nature upon him and to be born of a pure Virgin: Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen. (THE COLLECT FOR CHRISTMAS DAY, BCP PAGE 104)

INCARNATION

PHILIPPIANS 2: **THE HUMILITY OF JESUS**

¹So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.