

Heroic Word

CHRISTMAS DAY

CYCLE C

Isaiah 52:7–10

Hebrews 1:1–6

John 1:1–18

GATHERING

(The session begins with the singing of a Christmas hymn.) After the hymn the following poem is read aloud by one of the members:

Word
made flesh,
a recurring
event,
again
and again
God
giving
consent
to an act
of creation,
to life's
liberation
within
every culture
all over the earth.
Wherever
love lives,
it is God
giving birth.

(Share ways in which God is giving birth in your life this Advent-Christmas season.)

OPENING PRAYER

All: Inhabit our hearts,
 God of history,
 as You once inhabited
 human flesh.
 Be here among us
 with all of Your wisdom,
 all of Your power,
 all of Your mercy,
 all of Your love,
 that we might learn
 to be like God
 from our God Who came
 to be like us.
 Holy are You.
 Holy are we
 who are one with you forever. Amen.

Focus Question

Words can be cheap; words can be powerful. Words can build; words can destroy. When are you most uncomfortable with words?

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

Gospel: John 1:1-18

COMMENTARY

We are quite at home with words. We speak, read, write words daily. We may not understand all the words we use and may never know the meaning of some words we hear, but we know what the word "word" means. At least we think we do, until we come up against the word of God, and more specifically, God's incarnate Word. Then all of our cerebral, ocular, literal applications come screeching to a halt. The Word of God is not bound by our rules or the limits of our interpretations, for

the biblical word and the incarnate Word are never completely literal nor wholly literary.

God's word is not really verbal but verb, accomplishing what God intends. In the biblical tradition God's word and deed are inextricably bound. God's word *does*, that is, creates, consoles, frees, heals, weaves a counterpoint of good news as "the blind see again, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life" (Mt 11:5-6) through the word of the Word enfleshed. Today's gospel tells us that "in the beginning the word was with God and the word *was God*." God's word spoke the world into being, took flesh in Jesus and lived among us, "full of grace and truth."

It would have been enough had God created the universe and not chosen to live among us, and it would have been more than enough had God inhabited history in a single human experience, but God did more than that. The good news of God among us, "full of grace and truth," has universal implications, for "from that fullness we have all received." God's spirit lived not only in Jesus but lives in each one of us. God's word made flesh in Jesus is enfleshed again and again. We – you and me – are the Christ-child of Christmas. This is the miracle of Christmas, that God lifts up our frail humanity as a dwelling place of God.

Because God's word is essentially metaphor, there is always more there than meets the eye. In the parables, stories, narratives of scripture is wisdom yet to be discerned. In the stories and paradoxes of our own lives there is good news yet to be proclaimed and miracles yet to be enacted through the power of our indwelling God. We are called to wage peace in a world prone to war, to make room in our hearts and homes for the multitudes pushed to the margins of society by harsh economic times. "Be doers of the word and not hearers only," we read in the letter of James (vs. 22) . Jesus pushes us even further. We who would imitate the reality of his life know it is not enough to do God's word. Rather we must *be* that word enfleshed in us, so that our ordinary lives may mirror for others the fullness we have all received.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

1. What does God's word-made-flesh say to you this Christmas?

2. Can you recall an occasion when a person enabled you to experience the real meaning of peace or generosity or compassion through something they said or did? Share that experience and explain why it touched you as it did.
3. Speak of a time in your life when a word spoken brought new life.

RESPONSE IN ACTION

1. Choose a word you want to *Be* this week. Resolve to be that word at least once daily within your immediate circle of family and friends, and at least once in the wider circle of strangers and acquaintances.
2. In response to God's word of justice, share something of your abundance this week with someone who is deprived.
3. Christmas is often a time for family fights. Resolve to watch the words you use this Christmas season, especially with that family member with whom you are most likely to get into a war of words.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

All: O Word,
 power,
 nurturing space,
 unspeakable splendor,
 visible trace
 of love
 loving us
 face to face.
 Cult of all culture
 in Whom we place
 our ultimate
 yearning,
 divine
 discerning
 turning point
 Thou,

flesh of our flesh
now,
showing us all
how
claim to powers
of transforming
heartwarming
grace
is ours.
Amen.

(The session concludes with a Christmas hymn and the sharing of Christmas refreshments.)

The opening poem and closing prayer are from M.T. Winter's **WOMANWORD**, Crossroad, 1990.
The opening prayer is from her **WOMANPRAYER, WOMANSONG**, Crossroad, 1987.