

Christmas 2 – 3.1.2010 – The Incarnate Word

Before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be his in Christ

A recent article in the paper reported that NASA's Hubble Space Telescope has peered about 13 billion years into the universe's past and captured an image of the earliest galaxies: galaxies that formed from 600 million to 900 million years after the Big Bang!

About the same time I happened to read a review about a new book on deep-sea creatures. The deep sea occupies 85% of space where life can develop on earth and thus forms the planet's largest habitat, yet we know practically nothing about it! Current estimates of undiscovered species vary from 10 to 30 million. One of the major discoveries is that because the deep sea is pitch dark, creatures living down there have to make their own light; the vampire squid, for example, defends itself by spitting bioluminescent clouds from the ends of its arms which can glow for up to 10 minutes while the squid makes its getaway. To look at, this creature is bizarrely appealing: a usual looking squid but with a sort of Father Christmas hood and two flapping ears. Another deep-sea creature is the dumbo octopus; it is only 20cm in height with no tentacles, two small ears and what appears to be a tiny lolling tongue. *Dumbo octopodes* is found as deep as 5000 metres and its behaviour remains enigmatic; often observed resting on the bottom, surrounded by their mantle, what they are they doing there sitting so quietly in the dark, nobody knows.

So through the telescope we can now sight galaxies that formed 900 million years after the Big Bang, and we're on the threshold of exploring the Earth's largest reservoir of life in the deep sea. How we gasp with amazement and awe at the uniqueness, complexity and beauty of Creation. And human beings, according to the book of Genesis, are the Creator's crowning achievement, made in God's image and designed by God to be holy and blameless before him, created to be not "any-old-how" but to live in relationship with the Creator and with one another, concerned for the welfare of each other in community, and concerned for the whole Creation for which God has given us responsibility as stewards.

Well, even before the creation of the world, we are told in today's epistle, God had already decided in his heart that through Christ – God's eternal Son, loved by God before the foundation of the world – God would raise us as sons and daughters as parents bring up their children, by

shedding his love upon us. The Word was with God from the beginning of Creation as life-giver. The Word, as God's wisdom, took root in the chosen people who were to be a light to lighten other nations and, throughout Israel's history, communicated to them through the prophets. The Word, who is the light that enlightens all people, has now come into the world in the person of Jesus, to shine in our darkness.

In Christ Jesus, the Word that was God from the outset of Creation, we have the fullness of grace and truth: truth in the ways Jesus reveals for us God's design for living, and grace by disclosing the Father's infinite love and mercy towards us, endless forgiveness and acceptance, so that we can grow to become the children we were created to be. No wonder Paul is so ecstatic about the generosity of God's love shown to us in Christ; for in Christ we have been given wisdom and insight and the promise that, through him, God will heal and reconcile and eventually bring all things to completion.

This is the great news of Christmas that the one born among us as a fragile baby is the Word itself, the Word close to the Father's heart who has come into the world to share our human condition and to show us the true potential of our human nature, to be for us the one in whom – if we choose – we can set our hope.

What amazing love God has for us, in our imperfect lives, to have given us the gift of the Christ: for in Christ, God reminds us who we are, gives us a renewed outlook to think and act differently, and the grace of the Holy Spirit to nudge each one of us along the way to wholeness, thereby advancing the divine purpose for the whole of Creation.

Let us pray:

Eternal God, in whose sight a 1000 years are like a watch in the night; guide us now and always, as you have led us in times past, that our hearts may learn to choose your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Stephen Miles
Christ Church South Yarra