

The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh



Christmas 2016

Dearly Beloved in the Lord,

Why has this Child chosen to come to us?

Babies just *are*; they don't choose to be born. But this Child, this Jesus Christ, so chooses.

We can put it in terms of systematic theology: the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, the Logos, the Eternal Word, of His own will, in everlasting and joyful obedience to the Father, under the power of the Holy Spirit, takes on the human flesh of the Virgin Mary His Mother, and is made fully human: synapses, pulse, fingers and toes, the whole nine yards.

Of *His own will*, He chooses. And He chooses *us*.

He chooses to make His home among us so that we might be at home with Him — so that we, after eons of wandering, might finally find our way back to our Father's house. And He begins the journey for us, not by insisting we come to Him, but by coming to us.

Think of the gift. We are so rarely at home with each other, so often not at home in our own skins. And yet God has chosen to be at home with us.

He is not embarrassed by our failed housekeeping, not afraid of our dinner-table shouting matches, not allergic to our pets. When our teenagers storm out of the room, He pursues them; when they scream they wish they had never been born, He treasures the moment they were. He lays down His own flesh as the living bridge across our broken relationships. His embrace comforts our thwarted hopes. His joy animates us. When our loved ones are torn from us, His flesh feels the wound, His heart the grief.

God-at-home-with-us: Who better to guide us back to our Father's house?

He does not merely give us directions, or even lead us by the hand. He carries us, as a mother carries her child. Even if the road is dark and long, and we feel so weary we could die, He will make sure we arrive safely, will bring us over the threshold, and feed us from the rich store of God's own life.

What if we dared to believe that we can do the same for one another now? Even now, as we are on the road, this incarnate Lord supplies us with all we need to carry one another: to give mercy to those who need mercy, rest to those who need rest, strength to the weak, power to the poor. By His grace we can be at home, even with those who frighten or offend us. By His Spirit we can draw near to the broken-hearted, binding up their wounds in prayer, restoring them in the full power of the Father's love.

He has given all this to us. How can we not give it away?

Wherever you are in these days of the Nativity, may you find strength for the journey, rest in the Christ who is at home with you, and joy in the light that pours from the Father's house.

Faithfully your bishop,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dorsey", with a small cross at the end.

(The Right Reverend) Dorsey W.M. McConnell, D.D.

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