



Office of the Vice President for Mission

TO: The Gonzaga Community
FROM: Frank E. Case, S.J. and Shanea Giroux
SUBJ: Moment for Mission
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Merry Christmas!

In the gospel of John we read, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us....” (John 1:14) The Divine Word took on our human nature, and in doing so gave to each of us humans a share in Divine life. What a wonderful – and terribly earth-shaking – mystery! God is part of us and we are immersed in God’s divine life.

Yearly the celebration of Christmas evokes a sense of wonder. Think of the shepherds, the wise men, Simeon and Anna, youngsters around a crib. Over in Italy we used to love to tour the *presepi*, the crib scenes, displayed during the Christmas season in many of the Roman churches. If you’ve never seen these, they are highly elaborate scenes, often displaying entire villages with their shops, their squares, the homes of the people living there, and herds of sheep in the surrounding countryside. (It was sometimes a challenge to discover the actual nativity scene in the midst of the rest of village life.) The locals would find delight and cause for reflection in these crib scenes. I remember one time when an elderly woman in Naples approached the crib scene in the back of the church and blew a kiss to each person in the scene. This was her way of expressing her thanks to the Word that became flesh and lives among us even today. God’s Word took on all of this, the whole village scene with all its dimensions of human life.

We can enter into this mystery of the Word become flesh in whatever way suits us – a crib scene, a quiet evening before the family hearth, an exchange of greetings with loved ones and friends, a cup of cappuccino sitting at an outdoor table watching the crowds go by, the liturgies of Christmas eve and Christmas day. Gaze at our human nature, at our global village, in all its wonderful manifestations. Gaze long enough and you’ll soon recognize the Word.

“The Word became flesh and lived among us.” When you come right down to it, this is the locus and focus of our mission to educate the whole person – the flesh and the Word.

In his recent apostolic exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis said something about mission that is relevant, I think, to this reflection.

Mission is not like a business transaction or investment, or even a humanitarian activity. It is not a show where we count how many people come as a result of our publicity; it is something much deeper, which escapes all measurement. (n. 279)