

The Word

If you're a Fox News fan, you know all about the so-called War on Christmas.

It's a theme taken out by Fox every year for the past several years just as regularly as the rest of us unpack Christmas ornaments and lighting.

One of the posters made popular is one showing a picture of Santa Cause on one side, and on the other side, a portrait of the holy family during the night of the Nativity.

And at the bottom is this question: "Whose birthday is it, anyway?"

And the obvious answer is, of course, that it's Jesus' birthday.

And last night, that fact was driven home quite nicely with the beautiful infancy narrative that Luke gives us, with his shepherds in the field and angelic choirs and of course, the babe in the manger.

Last night, there was no doubt whose birthday we celebrate.

But this morning, this first of the twelve days of Christmas, the question again peeks out at us: "Whose birthday is it today?"

John's gospel gives us nothing of a pregnant teenager or a lonely birth in a barn; John says nothing of angels or shepherds or swaddling clothes.

Instead, John begins at the beginning; with the Word, in Greek, the Logos, literally translated "pitching his tent among us."

As Luke tells us, God chooses to pitch his tent among the outsiders, among the weak, among those the powerful scorn and the rich simply ignore.

"There, on the fringe of society," writes [Gustavo Gutiérrez](#), the Word became history, contingency, solidarity, and weakness."

That he pitched his tent among us suggests not only a desire for intimacy but a special affinity with the displaced and dispossessed, with migrants, refugees, deportees, detainees, "aliens" of all kinds — all men, women, and children, past, present, and future, in forced exile.

And if we read the nativity narratives without the scandal of our current immigration crisis in mind we are missing something crucial about their significance. David Lose.

That the Word pitches his tent among us says an awfully lot about who and what God is not.

God is not the distant God who started the whole ball rolling, and then leaves us to our own devices, as so much of America's civil religion would have us believe.

God is not some kind of angry God who allows horrors such as the Newtown travesty to occur because, as some so-called Christian leaders claim, and I quote: "we have abandoned God."

From our earliest traditions which find God clothing Adam and Eve when they chose to walk away from God, through the struggles of the Jewish people, and God's struggles with them to learn the ways of kindness, gentleness and humbly walking with God; right until this day, when God surrenders all the glories of heaven to become one of us, the constant truth about God is that God longs to be with us.

It is because of that longing that we can join with St. Paul and proclaim from the rooftops, that no matter the travails or temptations or successes or failures of this life, no matter our doubts, no matter our fears, we can loudly announce, with conviction and passion:

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom 8:38-39.

And so, again we can ask the question: "Whose birthday is it today?"

Listen, once again, to St. John,

"He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.

But to all who received him, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:10-13).

"To all who received him, he gave power to become children of God."

Whose birthday is it, my friends?

It is ours.

Happy birthday to all of you!