Sunday, January 4, 1981
THIS WORD BECAME FLESH
John 1:1-5,9-14

“In the beginning was the Word... All things were made through Him... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us!”

By “Word” the writer of John’s Gospel means the active self, expression of God, the love of God, the divine purpose and divine energy, God’s creative impulse, God’s loving Spirit.

In other words, this same loving Force which created the universe billions of years ago and is still lovingly creating, this Word became flesh; the love of God became a human being in Jesus of Nazareth. This Word became what we are and lived among us.

As we enter this new year of 1981, let’s look again at what all this means for us.

1. First, the love of God becoming flesh reminds us anew that creation, the world, the physical is created by God and therefore is good.

In John’s time and in our time, there are those who believe that flesh somehow contaminates spirit — that only spirit is good.

But God’s love becoming flesh in Jesus of Nazareth is God’s approving “yes” to the world of sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell. “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows his handiwork.” Our physical existence including our human bodies are meant by God to be good. All of creation reveals God’s handiwork.

We make a mockery of the goodness of God’s world when we try to divorce spirit from matter, soul from body. We do this when we devalue our own bodies, giving them less care and maintenance that we give our automobiles; when we burden ourselves with junk food, tobacco, drugs and more.

We devalue God’s creation and ourselves when we run rough-shod over much of the natural beauty of the world. The L love of God becoming flesh is God’s affirmation of the whole of creation.

Too often we try to separate ourselves from the rest of creation as if only the spiritual side of ourselves were good. Or we see ourselves as independent of nature and act as if we can live on our own without help from anyone or anything, much less God.

I like the way Dr. Lewis Thomas puts it in his book “The Lives of a Cell.”

A good case can be made for our nonexistence as entities. We are not made up, as we had always supposed, of suc-cessively enriched packets of our own parts. We are shared, rented, occupied. At the interior of our cells, driving them, providing the oxidative energy that sends us out for the improvement of each shining day, are the mitochondria, and in a strict sense they are not ours. They turn out to be separate little creatures, primitive bacteria, that are older than we human beings. Without them, we would not move a muscle, drum a finger, think a thought.”

In another essay, Thomas notes, “Every creature is in some sense, connected to and dependent on the rest.”

“The Divine Energy” which became flesh pervades all of creation. Thus, in the deepest sense, all things are good, crab grass, germs, bacteria, viruses, when all is in a harmonious balance. It’s when things get out of balance, harmony, that destruction results.

2, This means secondly, that the Love of God, this Word which became flesh, wants to become flesh in us. And when we allow it, our lives begin to become more harmonious — healing begins to take place within us and in our relation-ships with other living things.

When this Word, this love of God becomes flesh in us, then God is no longer distant, no longer hidden or lost in theological abstractions. We do not know God, really, through book or creed or lesson or sermon: these help, but we really understand what is meant by the name “God” through the experience of those human relationships wherein we are loved, cared for, called to account, reconciled, given hope; and in those private and public times of prayer when we are open to the Spirit of God entering our lives.

This Word, this Love of God becomes flesh when a child is cherished and nurtured, or when a battered child is loved back to humanness. When a young or old woman is rescued from the despair of the streets; when a young or old man is rescued from the despair of believing that he has no future; when any person is encouraged to feel that his or her human worth does not depend on his financial success, then the Word has become flesh.

When the oppressed are set free; when a door is opened because someone cares; when initiatives toward peace are taken; when sacrifice is accepted for the sake of justice, when prejudice is overcome, then the Word has become flesh.

Spiritual realities, spiritual truths are often transmitted and revealed through material, through the physical, through acts of love and mercy.

This morning we are to experience the Love of God, the Word made flesh, through the materials of bread and wine, and in our eating and drinking together as children of God.

May the Love of God continue to be made flesh in each one of us today and forever.