

CHRISTMAS 2-2021
Sirach 24:1-2;8-12
Eph 1:3-6;15-18
Jn1:1-5;9-14

It was Descartes who is reported to have said, 'I think, therefore I am.' This Christmas the retailers have been urging everyone to splash out more than ever, so their slogan is, "I spend, therefore I am." The Christian slogan must always be, "I worship, therefore I am." The interesting thing is that we humans tend to grow to resemble the object of our worship because we are not born to be free, we are born to be possessed by that which is worshipped. Perhaps this explains why it is said that some people resemble their dogs, cats or pet fish!

Those who say Morning Prayer in the Ordinarie form say daily, "*O God the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom....*" We acknowledge that serving ourselves rather than God does not bring us total freedom. Wednesday of this week is the feast of the Epiphany when we commemorate the visit of the Wise men to the infant Jesus and learn that they fell down and worshipped him before presenting their gifts. Worship and service go together.

Worship of God must come first for Christian disciples. Then we are able to offer to use the gifts, skills and talents that he has given us, in his service.

The author of the Book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) identifies Wisdom and the Word of God who was present at creation in the heavens and the earth, in the abyss of Sheol and in the pillar of cloud which became Wisdom's throne as Moses led Israel out of Egypt. Yet Wisdom sought a resting place on earth and finds it in the people of God.

St Paul tells the Ephesian Christians that God has created us so that he can share himself with us if we invite him to do so. He says the forces of good and evil campaign against each other for our hearts and minds. We Christians believe that life has a spiritual dimension which requires a greater level of allegiance beyond that which earthly living requires. It is Wisdom that enables us to distinguish between what is good and what is evil, and this is what is called spiritual enlightenment.

St John assures us that Jesus is the Word of God. He is the source of life and light who is either not understood or is not overcome by darkness. Spiritual enlightenment enables us to recognise who Jesus really is – God who has made his home with us so that we can be at home with him as his adopted children.

If we are not enlightened what we see in the birth of Jesus is a baby, stable, parents, animals, shepherds and Wise Men. We interpret this scene as an example of peace, love, joy, kindness, happiness, families and community spirit. These things are worthy but worldly, They are humanitarian aspirations and this explains why many atheists and agnostics are happy to celebrate the concept of goodwill to all men at Christmas rather than worship the One who *is* love, joy and peace who bestows his favour on those who are of good will.

In order to keep the rumour of Christ in Christmas, it is tempting for Christians to collude with the aspirations of humanitarianism rather than to proclaim the one who has revealed God to us, and that salvation comes from being in a right relationship with him.

Worshipping the virtues of love and compassion rather than worshipping the One who **is** love, has handed the power of life and death to human beings who decide who and what is dispensable, what we are allowed to think and what the limits of parental influence and guidance over their children are, to say nothing of determining what can be prayed for. Big Brother is not simply watching us, he is controlling us, and we know that control is the opposite of love. The war is raging and we must remain steadfast in the faith.

We become who or what we worship. Next time you look in a mirror, ask yourselves who you look like!

Msgr Harry Entwistle
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