

Blessed be God who animates our lives and offers us the Incarnation that we too might know the divinity enfleshed within us and spread holiness in the world. AMEN

In his collection of proems or poetic essays, Brian Doyle, writes these words about his mother: the salt sea from whom I came; she never turned aside a poor or hungry soul did my mama and she patiently taught children at home and in school for years and years and she has the sharpest and quickest of wits and tongues, does my mama the deft story teller, my mother with her fingers in the deep holy loam and skin of the earth, my mother who loves the smoky magical theater and miracle of the Mass, my mother with the memory of twenty elephants and a mind far more capacious than all of her children put together, my mother with a ferocious commitment to peace and justice and honest talk especially in the political and religious arenas where lies kill people and bleed souls, my mother who has not a jot nor an iota of pious nonsense in her, my mother who thinks that the divisions among Christian faiths are silly and stupid, my mother who knows more about the New testament than I ever will and is fond of quoting the line wherein children are told to care for their fathers even when their minds go which used to make my dad laugh in the other room, my mother stubborn as ten mules my mother who took all her stunning talents and bent them toward love and celebrating and living the wildly improbably message of

the Christ a message she thought could and should change the world my mother who devoted her whole life to the possibility of that mad idea my mother now near the end of her time on this God's earth, my mother soon to sift to dust my mother more bent and fragile every minute my mother whose warm salty voice was the first thing I ever heard and I cannot imagine a world without that grinning voice a world without my mama in it.

When I ponder Incarnation, I search for stories which are both holy and whimsical

When I reflect on John's prologue, I try to remember stories which weave the divine and the flesh

When I pray about the fullness of time and the Word made flesh in it, I find myself drawn to stories such as these which seem to locate God's sacred presence in the everyday extraordinariness of the ordinary.

These are stories of Love enfleshed...

And while there is nothing ordinary about CHrist and nothing ordinary about mothers, there is something extraordinarily wise and wonderful and awesome about Brian Doyle's coupling of his mother and divine acts of love with John's prologue and God's fullness of love made flesh.

John's prologue offers us the Christmas story in a mystical and mysterious way, different from the depictions of Luke and Matthew. No physical location, no manger or inn or

town. As such John's is I believe an offering of a cosmic truth, a universal Christ, in which the Word, the Logos, the most extreme original and full divinity, becomes flesh, the most literal and understandable if shocking aspect of humanness.

Stories of love enfleshed make the Incarnation more real for us! No less miraculous!

Stories of love enfleshed reach deep into our souls and touch the divine in us

Stories told in the manner of Doyle's in exquisite detail with intimate attention reveal the divinity with which we and all creation has been enriched.

And so if we tell those stories we also may not only discover incarnational aspects in our lives but we might also discern how God is calling us to respond to them. The Incarnation of God, the prologues of John, the wonder and inspiration of Scripture call to us to not only be witnesses of God's grace and glory but also to respond...to breath out the Spirit which has inspired and gifted us.

As Howard Thurman the great mystic theologian says this is when the work of Christmas begins:

When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:

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The Rev. Dr. Martha Tucker
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to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart.

On this First Sunday of Christmas, inspired by the words of Isaiah, the psalmist the writer of Hebrews and John we are called to wonder at the immensity and mystery of the Incarnation, to look for signs of it in our lives, and to be the presence of the cosmic love of Christ to others.

Ours is an incarnational faith which means at least that we don't just observe a nice peaceful manger scene and walk away feeling warm and fuzzy. Ours is an incarnational faith which assures us that each of us too is enfleshed with the seed of divinity. Each of us is to live into the Christ within and among us and to do what Jesus taught us. We are to be the John the Baptists, the Marys, the wiseones, the shepherds, the Simeons We are to begin and continue the work of christmas which is the work of incarnation: to bind up the broken hearted and serve the poor. to bring peace to everyone. to live into our baptismal covenant. AMEN