

In the name of The Father the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

In the beginning was The Word.

Words have fascinated me ever since I was a child, because words can do so many different things. I love how they be shaped and manipulated to create rhythms by poets, I appreciate words when they console, comfort, and build community, but I lament that way that words can be so easily used to divide or cause harm. I also like the way that words can be played with, to raise a laugh or even a groan – for example;

What is the difference between the Christmas alphabet and the ordinary alphabet?

No el.

What did the English teacher call Santa's elves?

Subordinate clauses.

And my personal favourite ...

How did Mary and Joseph know that Jesus weighed exactly 8lb 6ozs?

Because they gave him ... a-weigh-in-the-manger.

It is probably no surprise then, that I also like word games – my favourite being Scrabble - and a number of Christmases ago, I was given this – now rather dog-eared book of the Official Scrabble Words.

In here we find lists and lists of vocabulary some of which are very unusual – who here knows what Epizeuxes or Rendzina might mean? I certainly don't know, because the book lists all these nouns, verbs and adjectives without any explanation.

Words without definitions are surely little more than a bunch of letters, flat, empty, and lifeless on a page unable to dance or play, console or comfort, until they have been given their meaning; therefore, a definition, is essentially the soul of a word.

In the Gospel for this Christmas Day we hear speak of 'The Word' but the great danger is that this will too just lie on the page as nothing more than seven flat and lifeless letters if not given its proper definition.

When the author wrote 'The Word' in this text he had a particular set of meanings in mind. He knew that the Greek philosophers used 'The Word' to describe God's big idea; a unifying force that links and orders the whole cosmos, but he also knew that the Jewish tradition used 'The Word' to describe the wisdom of God; informing and directing the creation and sustenance of the universe and everything therein.

It was with these two rather abstract and distant definitions that John begins to write, but by then identifying 'The Word' with the person of Christ he takes the significance to a whole new level.

In writing that through 'The Word', all things were made, he reveals that the order, beauty, and glory, of the cosmos has not come from some impersonal or distant force ... but from a transcendent, personal, creating God.

In writing 'The Word became flesh'
he expands the definition into God becoming someone who talked and walked, and speaks with us, face to face and heart to heart.
No longer distant, but God with us, God among us.

The Word humanly embodied,
can dance, play, console, comfort, heal divisions and harm, and even laugh,
because it becomes defined by who we meet in Jesus Christ.

No longer a flat text, lifeless letters, or an inaccessible concept,
The Word became present in the heart and breath of a human baby.
Small enough to be placed into fragile human hands
yet mighty enough to expand all meaning forevermore.
And watching Jesus grow and live and serve in this world reveals to us,
that the real definition, the soul, of *The Word*, is love.
God's self definition of Himself and for us, is love.

Because of love, *The Word* dances up from the printed page and hails from the
heavens to be here with us. Through love, he was to birth, and breathed our air and
walked our earth. The birth of Jesus Christ was God's love letter to creation, inviting
us to join him in sharing that love with the world. You are not alone, I have not
abandoned you, I am with you, always, writes *The Word of God*, to each of us by name
and signed in the name of Christ.

And the result of all this is to turn our own lives into the love letter of God to the
world. To bring us to life, to dance to play, to console, to comfort, to heal division and
harm, and to laugh.

On Christmas Day, a day full of beautiful and mysterious words, we are each invited to
gaze upon this crib and hear once more the heartbeat of love in our universe and to
hear Him whisper his *Word of love* into our world.

The word of love that wove his way into this world so that any flat, empty, and lifeless words can be re-defined to speak of his love.

Love and love alone brought God to be with us
and to offer us the love that brings us all to life.

Happy Christmas to you all and
may God bless you with hearing the heartbeat of his love in your hearts,
and equip you to wield the wisdom of his word in this world.

Amen