

## **Bishop's December Message**

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth... and from his fullness have we all received grace multiplied by grace." So writes John the Evangelist in the hymn to the Word which is the prologue to his gospel.

What is Christmas? It is nothing less than the physical intersection of the Fullness of God with humankind. Philosophers argue that the finite cannot contain the infinite. Theologians argue that the human cannot contain the fullness of the Divine. And then comes the Christ-child, born of Mary, caroled by the Heavenly host, paid homage by shepherds. The Word enfleshed, full of grace and truth.

As Lutherans, we believe, teach and confess that it is grace that saves us. We say it a lot, and try to incorporate it into our logos and mission statements as frequently as possible. I think, though, that we know the word "grace" itself much more than the holy reality it denotes. The best description of grace I have ever heard came (not from a Lutheran) but from an Evangelical. Phillip Yancey wrote about grace that there's nothing you can do to make God love you more, and there's nothing you can do to make God love you less. God loves you because God is good – not because you are. That's what's so amazing about grace!

Grace multiplied by grace. The way I see it, the world, this culture, our church, your life and mine, could all use more of that – grace multiplied by grace. Literally, grace squared, for the mathematically inclined.

God's riches at Christ's expense, enfleshed in Jesus, incarnated in God's people by the indwelling and empowering Spirit. Let there be more grace! Grace in international relations, grace in the political sphere, grace in matters of social justice, grace in the workplace, with the spouse, for the kids and for the elders – more grace.

As you mark again the holy Nativity of the Christ, may the grace Christ came to bring pervade your heart, mind and spirit. May you be so filled with that spirit of grace that you can't help but let it sneak out, without any forethought or prior planning, in all that you say and do.

Grace to you this Christmas!

+Ronald B. Mayan, Bishop  
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