



Ten ways to Experience the Word Made Flesh

Christmas celebrates a great mystery of love: *the Word became flesh*. Our God who is divine became human, enfleshed before our eyes. This mystery touches us every day. Our God is intimately involved in every aspect of our bodily existence. The reflections that follow are inspired by Pope John Paul II's 'Theology of the Body.'

1. Stand in awe of creation

In Christ, God enters the 'heart' of the world and confronts us with the worth and dignity of our humanity.

Reflect on the gift of creation. Gaze upon a newborn. Savour the growing-up years of a child. Praise God as you engage in vigorous exercise. Embrace the ageing process. Even our mundane bodily functions are marvellous evidence of God's creativity.

2. Cherish sexuality

Men and women are created wonderfully different to one another, made for union with one another.

Ask yourself: As a man, how can I love, respect and call forth the women in my life? As a woman, how can I love, respect and call forth the men in my life?

3. Revere the holiness of sexual love

In the one-flesh union of husband and wife, God's life and love is revealed to the world.

Thank your parents (in prayer if they have died) for their gift of life to you. Couples, take time to nourish your intimacy: rekindle your romance, pray for passion, affirm each other, make time for the two of you. Pray together.

4. Treasure the witness of celibate love

Through the gift of their loving commitment celibates spiritually give birth to and nourish the life of God's people.

Thank a celibate person who has especially gifted you through his/her life. Write a letter. Name a child after him/her. Offer a prayer. Speak well of this person to others.

5. God is with us

There is no aspect of human experience that cannot be touched by God's love.

Name an aspect of your life (a grief, a joy, a seemingly trivial matter) that you are 'keeping' from God. Why are you holding this back? Bring this part of your life to Jesus.

6. Thirst for 'more'

What makes us uniquely human is our capacity to go beyond ourselves in love, to thirst for the 'more' in life.

Review your life with a wise, prayerful person. In what way is God calling you forward? Take a step beyond your comfort zone.

7. Born to love

We are made in God's image. We are made to love and be loved.

Think of practical ways to teach your children that real wealth is not material acquisition but a life filled with love. E.g., praise your children for who they are, not just their material accomplishments.

8. Temple of the Holy Spirit

It is through the human body that the invisible mystery of love is visibly revealed to the world.

Think of one way in which you could show greater care and respect for the gift of your body, the gift of self.

9. Seek the truth

None of us have our humanity perfectly worked out. Redemption is a journey. It takes time.

Pray for courage. Seek truth.

10. Start with today

St Irenaeus said, "The glory of God is a human being fully alive."

Live this day to the full, one step at a time.

Helpful Hint

The message of Christmas confronts us with the goodness and worth of our own bodily existence. This Christmas, as you gaze upon the nativity scene and sing 'O Holy Night,' recall the phrase: *the word became flesh*. Ponder the gift of your body, your sexuality, your enfleshed existence, your personhood, what it means to be created in God's image.

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