

A Manger Meditation 2020



A few years ago a grandmother shared with me that while visiting her grandchildren she noticed that the infant Jesus was missing from the family's indoor Nativity scene. When she asked her 7 year old granddaughter where Baby Jesus was, the girl replied that his absence was due to her 2 year old sister. Puzzled, the woman asked why, to which the 7 year old replied: "Mom says Baby Jesus is a choking hazard." This got me thinking...



SWALLOW, I – Let's begin by swallowing some numbers regarding the observable universe:

- 1) It is about 15 billion years old;
- 2) Earth is one of eight planets in our solar system, revolving around our star (sun).
- 3) Our solar system is one of billions of solar systems in our one galaxy (The Milky Way).

- 4) If we could travel at the speed of light (186,000 miles per **second**) it would take us 100 years to cross our one galaxy.
- 5) There are billions of galaxies.



SWALLOW, II – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be” (John 1:1-3). The universe we can observe (and anything we cannot perceive) has a Maker who was in the beginning and who sustains each molecule in existence each second.



SWALLOW, III – “...and the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). The Creator is by definition outside of and not a part of creation. Yet each Christmas we celebrate the category shattering thought / event that the Creator has entered into and become part of creation! In the person of Christ creation becomes capable of containing its Creator! The cosmos should explode and vanish, but it does not!



SWALLOW IV – What’s more (!) the child whose birth we are celebrating “is the image of the invisible God...and in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Colossians:1:15, 19-20). Full God and full human in one and the same person!



SWALLOW, V - The night the Savior **enters** this world, he is laid in a container for animal food (a manger). The night before the Savior **exits** this world, he gives himself to us as food and drink: “Take, eat, this is my Body...this is my Blood”. Jesus’ life and ministry are book-ended or framed by presenting a Messiah who is a meal....for us....and for animals....for creation itself....our Common Home.



SWALLOW VI – We are called to swallow not only the person of Jesus, but also the perspectives, values and message of Jesus, eg.:

“The Father and I are one”; the first shall be last, the last shall be first”; “this man welcomes sinners and eats with them”; “there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine who have no need to repent”; “whatsoever you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me”; “blessed are the poor”; “pray for those who persecute you”...”the Kingdom is at hand”.



HOLY HEIMLICH – In each Sunday and Holyday Mass we bow profoundly when during the Creed we say: “*and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man.*” We bow because what we are saying is meant to “take our breath away” and” knock our legs out from under us”. Within Masses on Christmas and on the Conception of Jesus nine months earlier (March 25th)---when we celebrate the Incarnation most solemnly---when we come to these words in the Creed **we stop, kneel and go silent.** I think of this ritual gesture as an annual spiritual Heimlich maneuver to bodily acknowledge the immense, infinite Mystery we are attempting to take in, swallow, believe and live. We need to pause all that we are doing, drop to our knees, and be still. Otherwise we might choke on Baby Jesus. Let’s pray for one another and ask God for the gifts of Stillness, awe and gratitude this Christmas.

