

What's in a word?

If I said “Rhynchokinesis”, probably not much unless you are an ornithologist.

But If I said “beach”, you probably conjure up images of warm sun, waves, driftwood, seashells, and boardwalks.

You might even smell caramel corn and hear the gulls laughing and salivate at the thought of taffy or fudge.

There's quite a bit in that simple word.

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Jesus is not a simple word.

Jesus is the Word of God in whom all other words are contained.

Jesus is the fullness of God

- the fullness of creation
- – the fullness of the universe –
- the fullness of all that is in the heart of God –
- in a small package that we can grasp because he is also human.

Think about it.

No matter how much research we do, there is always new discovery

- in the ocean,
- inside volcanoes,
- in outer space,
- under logs

– and no matter how much we probe, we will never fully comprehend the cosmos.

But a baby – we can handle a baby.

We hold a baby in our arms.

We look lovingly into his eyes.

We coo and smile and the Baby coos and smiles back.

We know what a baby does – he eats and sleeps and cries and poops.

Jesus is God we can hold in our arms and

**whose smile of delight is the deepest love of the Almighty for us.**

The brightness in his eyes is brighter than the sun, moon, stars, comets and supernovas all put together.

He is the light that shatters all darkness and leaves no shadows.

**But when he looks at us, we can bear it because it is wrapped in a human body.**

So great is God's love for us that he comes in the tenderest way possible for us to receive.

And how *do* we receive this living Word of God,

    this darkness shattering Light,

        this Son of God whose love is overwhelming?

John's Gospel tells us – by being born of God.

And how are we born of God?

Not by water and blood as Jesus was of Mary and we were from our mothers' wombs,

But by water and the Holy Spirit – by the Word and sign of Holy Baptism, as Paul's letter to Titus clearly describes.

**And we continue to receive our dear Jesus in bread and wine,**

his own body and blood that redeems our bodies and blood from eternal death and makes us inheritors of his glory.

We cannot rightly celebrate the birth of Jesus without also recognizing his redemptive death on Good Friday.

The manger and the cross always belong together.

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Did you know that Easter came before Christmas?

Followers of Jesus – participants in the apostolic church—

The people who heard Peter's and Paul's letters read and for whom James was pastor –

The martyrs of 200 years of cruel emperors and the believers who secretly worshiped in catacombs

**observed and celebrated the Paschal Triduum –that is Good Friday-Easter as the unique Christian festival.**

It was a historian in 221 AD, Sextus Julius Africanus, who wrote a timeline of the world and assigned December 25 as the date of Jesus' birth.

While there are several theories about this, the truth is no one knows for sure exactly on what date Jesus was born.

It wasn't until more than 800 years after his resurrection that the birth of Jesus was even widely celebrated as a form of worship – and not nearly as important as Easter.

**It is *why* he was born that is important – he was born to die and rise from the dead.**

He was born to give us a way to receive the deep and abiding love of God.

He was born to redeem humanity shadowed in the darkness of sin, evil and death.

He was born to clothe you and me in his robes of light.

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So how do we live wearing such a wardrobe?

Let us once again hold the Baby –

When we look at other people we encounter day to day, let us look into their eyes with the love of God we see coming to us from Jesus' eyes.

When we are aware of someone else crying out in despair or loneliness, let us reach out and pick them up and comfort them as we would the Baby.

When we see others struggling in the darkness, let us shine the light of Jesus into their hearts through prayer and patient presence.

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What's in a Word?

Nothing less than eternity and all of God's love when that Word is Jesus.

He is the greatest gift of all – Jesus, our Savior

– God in our lives

– and it is a gift meant to be shared.

For unlike the cookies and candies and cakes and the presents

– this gift will not be consumed,

wear out,

or be diminished in the sharing.

**Jesus is the very Love of God for all people – and especially for you.**

In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XMqFal5GCbA>