

The Nativity of the Lord

December 25, 2024

Reading

John 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14

St. Thomas of Villanova, O.S.A.
Archbishop of Valencia, Spain
1488-1555

The passage of the gospel we have just heard, dearly beloved brothers and sisters, calls for purity in the eyes of our hearts. As a result, you see, of John's preaching of the gospel, we have come to accept our Lord Jesus Christ as the maker of the entire creation in virtue of his divinity; and as the restorer of the fallen creation in virtue of his humanity. In the gospel itself we can discover what sort of man and how great a man John was, and thus from the merit of the retailer we can form some estimate of the price of the Word which could be uttered by such a man, or rather how that which surpasses all things can have no price. When a thing is put up for sale, it is either equal in value to the price or it is less than its worth, or it exceeds its value. When someone buys something for as much as its worth, the price is equal to the thing bought; when he buys it more cheaply, the price falls beneath its value; when he buys it more dearly, it exceeds it. Now equated with the Word of God, nothing can fall beneath it at exchange, nor can anything exceed it. Well, of course, all things can be put beneath the Word of God, because *all things were made through him*; however, they are not put beneath it as though they were a good price for the Word, so that anybody could pay something and receive the Word cheaply in exchange.

Still, if one can talk like this (and a certain way of speaking does allow it), you can say that the price for buying the Word is you, the buyer, when you give yourself in exchange for yourself to this Word. And so when we buy something, we look for something to give, in order to

get the thing we want to buy, by paying the price. And what we give in exchange is something outside us; even if we had it within us, it goes out outside us in order that we may have within us the thing we are buying with it. Whatever price people buying things find to pay for them, it has to be such that they pay what they have and receive what they don't have. The people, though, remain, from whom the price departs, and what they are paying the price for arrives instead. But now if you want to buy this Word, if you want to have it, don't look for something outside yourself you can give; give yourself. When you have done that, you don't lose yourself, as you lose the price when you buy something.

So the Word of God is set before us all. Let those buy it who can; all those who devoutly wish to can do so. You see, in that Word there is peace: *And peace on earth to people of good will*. So if you want to buy it, give yourself. This is the quasi-price of the Word (if it can be stated at all), when on paying it you do not lose yourself, and you acquire the Word for which you pay over yourself, and you acquire yourself in the word to whom you pay yourself.

And what do you pay over to the Word? Not something entirely alien to the Word for which you are giving yourself, but something that was made through that Word is given back to him to be refashioned. *All things were made through him*. If all things, then, of course, humanity, too. If heaven, if earth, if sea, if everything that is in them, if the entire creation, then, of course, most obviously, that creature who was made to the image of God, man, was made through the Word.