

backdrop against which everything he says about Jesus must be read in the light of the opening verse.



What about our origins? In the opening of the letter to the Ephesians our true origins are celebrated:

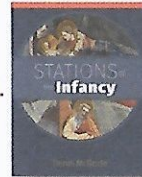
Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ. Before the world was made, he chose us, chose us in Christ, to be holy and spotless, and to live through love in his presence.

(Ephesians 1:3-4)

PRAYER

Most merciful God, you so loved the world that you gave your only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in him may not perish but enjoy everlasting life. Increase our faith, we pray, so that rooted and grounded in the mystery of the Word made flesh, we may forever attach ourselves to the one who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. We ask this through the merits of the same Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

Fr Denis McBride's book *Stations of the Infancy* is available from Redemptorist Publications. Visit www.rpbooks.co.uk to order. CODE: 1861 ISBN NO:9780852315590 Price: £12.95



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Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

To you, I lift up my soul, O my God. In you, I have trusted; let me not be put to shame. Nor let my enemies exult over me; and let none who hope in you be put to shame.

FIRST READING Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1. 3-8

PSALM Psalm 79

RESPONSE **God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.**

- O shepherd of Israel, hear us, shine forth from your cherubim throne. O Lord, rouse up your might, O Lord, come to our help. **R.**
- God of hosts, turn again, we implore, look down from heaven and see. Visit this vine and protect it, the vine your right hand has planted. **R.**

3. May your hand be on the man you have chosen, the man you have given your strength. And we shall never forsake you again: give us life that we may call upon your name. **R.**

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION
Alleluia, alleluia!
Let us see, O Lord, your mercy and give us your saving help.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Mark 13:33-37

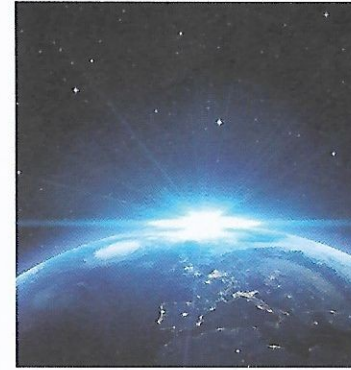
COMMUNION ANTIPHON
The Lord will bestow his bounty, and our earth shall yield its increase.

Next Sunday's Readings:
Genesis 3:9-15. 20
Ephesians 1:3-6. 11-12
Luke 1:26-38



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THE WORD BECOMES FLESH



THE EARTH FROM SPACE

The evangelist John introduces the Word as the creator, the ancestor of all that lives, and a light that shines in the darkness. Two negative notes are sounded: when the Word comes into the world, the world does not know him; neither do his own people accept him. The Word is the stranger from heaven. To all who accept him he gives power to become children of God.

Reading: John 1:1-5. 14

REFLECTION

When the evangelist John celebrates the beginning of the Jesus story he goes back before time, before history, before creation. The Jesus story in John's Gospel begins not with an adult Jesus by the River Jordan (Mark), or a newborn baby in Joseph's home in Bethlehem (Matthew), or a newborn lying in a borrowed manger in Bethlehem (Luke), but before the creation of the world. John's Messiah does not come from Bethlehem but from outside the realm of creation; neither can he be accurately identified as Jesus of Nazareth because he does not come from there but from the upper realm.

For John, the details of Jesus' earthly beginnings are irrelevant – no birth story is told, no mother is introduced, no time is recorded, no place is noted, no witnesses are named – because his true origin is beyond the cosmos: "In the beginning was the Word: and the Word was with God and the Word was God." John goes back beyond the prophetic story of Israel (Mark), and the Jewish story (Matthew), and the human story (Luke) to rework Genesis and anchor the beginning of the Jesus story in the originality of God.

Independently of the earlier three Gospels, John moves out of any historical frame and offers eternity as the real setting of the Jesus story. There is a sense in which John breaks free of any controls and limitations to the Jesus story, passes effortlessly beyond all earthly and historical barriers, to root the Jesus story in the eternity of God – a theological perception that dominates the creeds of the Church. John provides a unique interpretative

Stations of the Infancy



In a new series for *Sunday Bulletin* based on his latest book, *Stations of the Infancy*, Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R. looks at the Gospel beginnings of the Jesus story and helps us to reflect on them in our prayers.

29 NOVEMBER 2020

1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK 1