

Sermon—Homily
Lessons and Carols
Advent 4
December 19, 2021
William Bradbury

John 1:1-18

Catholic Spiritual writer Henri Nouwen was once asked what he meant by Original Sin to which he responded: **"I believe [original sin] is humanity's endless capacity for self-loathing.** From Richard Rohr

How is it then, that we, who are created by and through the Word of the One, True, Loving God, who "don't make no junk", feel so badly about ourselves?

There are many answers to that but I want to offer just one to ponder in our hearts as we journey toward Christmas:

One reason we are so self-loathing and so self-critical in the present and therefore so full of worry about the future is because our minds are under the control of powerful, yet false, images that overwhelm the truth of the experience of our true nature.

I read recently about a young girl who years ago was napping face down in a hammock when her older brother dropped a handful of grasshoppers down her back. She awoke suddenly in the sure knowledge that she was being attacked by every dangerous insect in the world.

In that moment of terror, a neuro-chip of fear was planted deeply in her mind, so that even as an adult, whenever she saw an insect that chip would be activated and she would re-experience that moment of terror. All the education in the world about how most insects are harmless, had not undone this deep fear.

In the same way countless sermons and spiritual books about the love of God do not overcome our childhood experiences of being unlovable and afraid.

What is required, therefore, are not just teachings, but powerful experiences of the true love, acceptance, and protection of the living God. See wonderful book: [Escaping from the Matrix](#) by Boyd and Larson

This is why "the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth". Christ came, and continues to come, to heal our false and painful

memories with the true and powerful experiences of the love of God made flesh in our lives.

Ilia Delio writes, "It may surprise us to know that the first thousand years of Christianity likely did not celebrate Christmas with a nativity scene, for the early Church was an Easter Church not a Christmas Church."

And it was only in the 13th century that Francis of Assisi set up the first living Nativity Scene with real animals. The villagers flocked to see it.

Francis himself was flooded with tears of joy as he experienced so deeply that the Word became flesh not just in Bethlehem, but in all creation; not just in Jesus, but also in his own heart. See Delio's website: Center for Christogenesis | Exploring Love at the Heart of the Universe

As we journey this next week toward Christmas, let's open our hearts to experiencing the Word made flesh in our lives that we may feel and know the Truth: that the One, True, Loving God made flesh in Christ always holds us and loves us, and all creation, like a mother.