

“What will you gain?” John 1:1-14

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Today we heard the Gospel according to John. Chapter 1. The very famous verses. This elevated and majestic language. How did it sound? Just think about this, these inspired words have come to us from such a distant past.

Words written by John! By the same John who was laying at Jesus' side on the last evening, the same who stood at the cross and witnessed the soldier's spear piercing Jesus' side. The same John to whom the mysteries of our history were revealed on Patmos Island. We just heard this same John telling us about Jesus.

It's interesting, this language... words, sounds, signs. They help us to receive the information, which is incredible. But they also often hide the magnitude of their message. Think about what we heard today; what John wrote to us!

The first 14 verses in the Gospel according to John. Such simple text. Such simple words. Nothing complicated. All of them are well known. And yet... what does this mean – **“in the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God...**

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ... The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world...

... to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God... we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The Word... God... life... light... darkness... children of God... glory... grace ... truth. Such simple words. But at the same time bottomless, inexhaustible, indescribably deep words. And the reality that they try to communicate to us is far beyond anything that we can comprehend or understand.

Our sin, our alienation from our Creator has made us dull. It obscures our minds and robs us of true joy. We are miserable, and we don't even realize that. But if we could get this message, there would be no end to our joy, nothing could hinder our hope and trust in our God.

Our lives would overflow with meaning and purpose, and we would spend our days dreaming about our visible reunion with the Word, who was God, full of grace and truth, and who came into this world to make us children of God.

But what should we understand? That Jesus has brought all these things for us ... life, light, truth, grace, glory and our new identity – children of God. If only we could taste how good the Lord is! One gulp, one glimpse, a momentous experience of God's goodness and holiness could turn our lives upside down.

Today I wanted to reflect briefly just on one of these simple, but profound words that John uses in his Gospel account. Glory. Glory is the word. Glory of God. We use it often in the Church. In our Divine liturgy.

"Glory to God in the highest!" But what is this glory? How would you explain it to someone who is not familiar with such Biblical concepts? We could survey the entire Bible to get the full picture of what glory is.

We don't have that much time. When applied to human affairs, glory is related to abundance, wealth, significance, excellence, honour, dignity, fame. I guess we can relate to that. We are drawn to such things and to such people. If we can't be glorious people ourselves, we want to associate with them.

We want to tell others that we know this or that person, have met them, and so on. I do not usually mention my hobby, arm-wrestling, in my sermons, but this time it can serve us well to illustrate the point.

You probably haven't heard about my three seconds of worldly glory. Okay it was more like five minutes. It happened when I won my first Australian National Title a few years ago and the Sunrise TV crew, which is one of the most watched TV shows in Australia, came to our home to film an episode with my family, our congregations and my AW friends.

What was funny, I didn't know that so many around the world knew me. Suddenly I got on Facebook all those many people commenting and saying that they too know me, they lived where I lived, studied where I studied, etc. It was quite amusing.

This shows just how much we want to share in glory, even if by association. However, all human glory is fleeting. Whatever your fame, your riches, your

extraordinary talents, nothing lasts. We are gone, as are empires that we have built, our achievements, our big names, everything. There are only a few things that endure the test of time. But then there is God's glory.

And that is something entirely different. It is a real thing. Permanent. Unchanging. Imperishable. Eternal. It is about His holiness, about His majesty, about His extraordinary greatness. The Hebrew word for glory also means heaviness.

God's glory is the manifestation of who He is, of His very divine being, His might, His infinite power, His splendour, His majesty and magnificence. When God's glory appeared on Mount Sinai, Israel trembled and fled in fear.

When the glory of God filled the Tabernacle and later the Temple, no one could enter, for they just couldn't stand in God's presence. When the glory of God shone on Paul and his fellow-commandos on the road to Damascus, brighter than sun, they all fell on the ground, as did the cohort of heavily armed and battle-toughened soldiers when they came to capture Jesus. God's glory...

There is something intriguing about our fascination with glory. We crave it, we long for it, we marvel about it. As famous Christian writer C. S. Lewis put it – for every longing there is an answer. But if we long for something that can't be satisfied in this world, perhaps, we were created for another world...

If glory in this life, which withers like grass and fades away, is so appealing, then how about the divine glory?! And that is exactly what Jesus has brought us. He didn't come just to reveal God's glory. He came to do something more for us.

To bring to you something that you long for. He came to share God's glory with us. He came to bestow His divine glory on you. Jesus does it by embracing us in the divine fellowship with Himself and the Father, He does it by bestowing to us this new and extraordinary identity – children of God.

He does it by sending His Holy Spirit to dwell in us, by building us up as God's holy temple. He does it by making us fellow heirs with Him, the heirs of New Heavens and New Earth, where we will reign gloriously with Jesus forever.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us listen to Paul, to one person who had witnessed and experienced God's glory firsthand and not just once: **"Do not lose your heart [when facing challenges of this age]. Though our outer self is wasting away [and that is not fun], our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison."** (2 Co 4:17) And also: **"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."** (Rom 8:18).

When many and many were writing their comments on my Facebook page – that they too knew me – a dear friend of mine wrote something that has stuck with me. He wrote: "It is not just that I know him, but... he also knows me."

This is true also for each one of you. Not only you know the glorious and magnificent Word, who was in the beginning, through whom everything is created, who has come to us as the Word became flesh, as Jesus Christ, the glorious Son of God the Father, but... He also knows you. He. Knows. You.

The only person to rise from the dead knows you and calls you His brothers and sisters. You! The most influential person in the whole Universe knows you and calls you, His child. Yes, you! This God wants to share His glory with you.

It is not yet visible to our eyes, but one day it will be, when the glory of children of God is finally and fully revealed. On that day all your heartfelt longings for glory will be satisfied so abundantly by no one else, but our Lord Jesus Himself.

And such great news is worth celebrating!

Blessed Christmas, my glorious, glorious Fellow-Saints!

Amen.