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“That All May Know the Savior”

### Ordinary Mystery

There is a “back story” to Christmas. It is actually an all around, through, up the middle, in and out, before and after-story. The part of the story that we are already familiar with is worth telling and retelling throughout our lives. We gather with neighbors and friends in faith to hear the story. We tell it to our children. We listen with joy when we hear our children tell it to our grandchildren.

The story is one of promise and hope, although on the surface it surely did not seem to be at the time. The parents are poor, and they are displaced from their home because the powerful occupying forces want to count the people in order to accurately tax them. At best, this birth, this child seems ordinary, barely worth noticing. Why pay attention to this one? Why indeed!

We could ask the same question about bread. What is so special about ordinary bread, bread that is so insignificant looking that we hardly notice that it is bread? Why do we call it “The Bread of Life?” Why have people around the world, for thousands of years, pay homage to bread, the same way the Magi bowed down to a poor baby in a manger? Is there a connection?

You bet. We sometimes forget that the Incarnation is more than the story of a baby, as wonderful as that story is. The Incarnation is the mystery of our God, Mystery itself, becoming part of the world of creation, the world that very same God created. That happened throughout Jesus’ life, to be sure. The Incarnation begins with Christmas, the birth of the child Jesus. The Incarnation continues throughout all of Jesus’ life, and up to and beyond today. God took on the very created way of being that the God-self brought into being. Paul tells us that the Incarnation is when God poured himself out, becoming like a slave.

So the God-child, Jesus Christ, born in very humble circumstances so long ago, makes every child extraordinary. The fact that our God became one of us draws us up to God. This mystery of the Incarnation makes every child a wonder-child and every loaf of bread becomes holy. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we celebrate how God makes the ordinary become holy. “Merry Christmas” hardly seems to do justice to the miracle of Incarnation. Let’s spread this good news!