

Jesus is God's *Facebook* Profile
John 1:1-14 & Hebrews 1:1-4

When it comes to new technology and technological applications I may not quite be a dinosaur but I am certainly a step or two behind the times. I remember in the mid 1980's wondering why anyone would need a fax machine in their office. What a crazy extravagance. You can certainly wait a few days or a week for a letter. And if some document were so pressing that it had to be there right away you could pay for the service on a one-time basis. Now, of course, on those rare occasions when I send a fax because someone needs my signature, I impatiently put my documents in the tray, type in the phone # and wait for the fax to go through. What a bother; it's so much quicker to send an attachment by email.

I was the same way with the internet and email; I didn't get started on them right away. I can type 80 words per minute but I couldn't text my way out of a paper bag. I may be the only Priest in North America who doesn't have a *Blackberry*.

One of the *new* technological applications I've been slow to step into are all the clever new approaches to social networking: *My Space*, *Facebook*, *Linked-In* for business connections, and the like. I was fascinated the other day when someone showed me how to "*tweet*." A *tweet* is a 140 character message on *Twitter*, a kind of micro-blogging social networking system. It's kind of a one-liner you post reasonably often but not incessantly to keep up with friends and family members without having to say too much. It's very simple and instantaneous.

Being a step behind, 5 years from now when the cutting edge is something we haven't even imagined, you should look for my new profile in *Facebook* and first tentative cell phone photo's of my grandchildren on UTube. Who knows, by then I might even be *tweeting* on my new old fashioned *Blackberry*.

I'm not sure why I'm hesitant to embrace the newest technological advances. Really, most of them are simply better tools with which to communicate.

I've been thinking a lot about communications this week, because that's what the Gospel writer John tells us that God did with the world in sending us his Son. I used to hear people say, rather sentimentally, that the baby Jesus was God's Christmas card to the world. Well, that's nice but not nearly descriptive enough. It would be far more helpful to say that Jesus is God's *Facebook Profile* to the world.

Facebook is a marvelous tool to connect with people. A *Facebook Profile* is a means to say who you are, to proclaim how you want to be known. It offers a forum to say what you think, what you believe, what you like to do, where your tastes and interests lie. It also offers a wonderful way to connect to people – your *friends* – and to share details of your life with them. My daughter has explained to me that once you set-up your facebook profile, you can choose who you will *friend* of the people who want to connect with you and who you will *ignore*. Friends can leave messages on your *wall*. They can send a

bumper sticker (a picture with a message). You can give your friends a virtual *poke*, a *hug*, or even a *high five*.

Never a step behind, God sent his Son Jesus as the ultimate *Social Network*. The introduction to the Letter to the Hebrews describes the process.

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.

God's issue was how to *connect* with the world and the people he had spoken into existence. He spoke the *Word* of the Law to Moses and the Hebrew people on Mt. Sinai but they didn't get it; they failed to follow the Law as a means to know and connect with the Law Giver. And so God spoke many *Words* through his prophets speaking his love for his people, his desire for their allegiance, his desire for their hearts, his desire for their faithfulness. How else could God connect with his people without their understanding God's values: values of justice, integrity and holiness of life? God *posted* multiple *messages* on their *wall*. He sent his love – meeting them in worship and prayer. The Ark of the Covenant, the holy Temple and their traditions of worship were *bumper stickers* of his grace. He *poked* them through the challenging messages of the prophets. But they didn't get it. They turned away from him. They *ignored* his invitation to *friend* them. They chose other gods to *friend* instead of the One true Lord of heaven and earth. They oppressed the poor. They failed to honor God with their tithes and offerings. They turned away from him again and again. And we still do. The Gospel of John reflects on this *Word* of God, which was spoken by God and was with God and was indeed – God – from the beginning.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.

So God spoke his one true *Word* into their midst, into their world, into their lives. “*And the Word became flesh and lived among us.*”

Jesus is God's *Facebook profile* sent by God to connect with his people everywhere. The *Word* of God made flesh – Jesus, God's Son – was God's gift of himself to the world he had made, to the people he created and loved. Jesus was God's revelation in flesh and blood they could touch, in words and stories they could understand, in love they could receive, in servanthood they could imitate. Jesus was the *Word* God used to express how he felt about the people he had made in his own image. In Jesus God revealed that image, true and undistorted. Jesus is God's *profile*. Look at Jesus and we see what God's love looks like. Jesus is God's living invitation for us to be God's *friends*.

A social networking system invites people to be in relationship. And so Jesus is God's invitation for us to enter into a living relationship with him. “*To all who received him,*” John wrote, “*who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born not of blood or the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.*” In

letting God *friend* us we join God's family; we become brothers and sisters of Jesus, God's Son. God becomes our Father. When God *friends* us in Jesus he also makes us a network of *friends* with one another. "You are my friends," Jesus said to his disciples at the Last Supper, "if you do what I command you." (John 15:14) And what does Jesus *command* us to do? To love one another as he has loved us. So he invites us to be in community with one another.

He gives us lots of *bumper stickers* of his *friendship*: Holy Communion as the meal by which to remember him and to continue to stay *connected*. We have his words in the Gospels. He invites us to let his life live and grow within us, within our hearts. He promises to *poke* us through the Holy Spirit. He *hugs* us through the promise to be with us always even to the end of the ages. On our *wall* is posted the message that as we treat, as we serve, those who are lonely, who are sick, who are hungry, who are in any need, so we treat him.

On this holy night of Christmas Eve we remember how God began this social network. He did not need more *friends* in order to feel comfortable or look good. He is already complete within himself. But God loves us and knows how desperately we need his friendship, that without it we are lost. So God emptied himself of his heavenly grandeur, which is far more than we can comprehend. He showed us what he is like in a *Facebook profile* that begins with the birth of a baby boy to Mary and Joseph, not in grandeur, but in poverty and simplicity. Tonight we commemorate that birth and the wonderful way that the *Word of God became flesh and lived among us*.

Some of you may already have *profiles* on *Facebook* and be listed on several online social networks. Some of you, like me, may get there in time. But each and every one of us, whether we know it or not, need the connection that *friending* God in Jesus offers us. We may choose to *ignore* his offer to *friend us* through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus or we can *accept* him as our *friend*, our Savior and Lord. Let us begin by celebrating in joy, and wonder, and awe the gift of the *Word of God made flesh*, God's *profile* which came to us not online, but in person so many years ago in the birth of Jesus.
Amen.