**Christmas Day, Dec. 25, 2012, The Rev. Mary S. Trainor**

This is a day of peace, where there is not too much going on in town -- it is quiet on the roads, at home most of the gifts have been unwrapped, and after church it is time to relax on the couch. The world didn't end on Friday, as some predicted. Whew. There is now a bit of time to think and take a breather after all these weeks preparing for Christmas. We are just a week from a new year, so our thinking in the next week will include examining our lives: looking back and looking forward. For some, mostly worries and problems come to mind -- those problems might include aging, fear of death, fear of things to come. I looked up the list of the top 10 things people worry about now days and the future, health, and death are way up there near the top of the list. We just don't want to age or die! That must be why people always seem to make resolutions about exercise and diet! In fact, there is big money being made and devoted to research on things related to a popular "I" word: **immortality.** Immortality literally means: "not subject to death" -- so research on stem cells, plastic surgery, cryogenics, etc. are basically trying to discover ways to keep us from dying - or at least aging.

Dr. Shin Kubota is a scientist in Japan who has a strange life – he spends at least three hours every day tending his aquarium, which is full of multiple generations of a rare species of jellyfish called *Turritopsis*. Why does he do this? The answer is found in that word: immortality. It turns out that this species of jellyfish never dies—an individual organisms' cells keep making copies of themselves on and on. Dr. Kubota's ample research funding is from human sponsors longing to live forever-to get rid of the issues that we face in aging and death.

Today we celebrate Christmas, and it is the Church's feast day of another "I" word: the Incarnation. Incarnation is a fancy word that refers to the amazing fact that God became human. This is the heart of our Christmas celebration - that God broke into our world of sin and sorrow to save us. God entered our world as an infant who was both fully human and fully divine. The master mind behind the universe did not stay up in remote, unknowable, far away from the evil and suffering of earth, in some eternal suburb, removed from the messiness of our lives. Instead, God came here to the earth as a human to experience what we do, to be here with us, to suffer as well as experience joy. That God became flesh, the Incarnation, is one of the central doctrines of the Christian faith. In all the other world religions, God does not become a human being. God understand what you are going through and facing in your life.

The Incarnation is also about the other "I" word: immortality. Christmas is about Jesus being born **in you** forever, and that process results both in your life being renewed and in you being invited to immortality in heaven. Jesus defeated death on the cross. It's true! So, the Good News is that you really don't have to worry about all that immortality research or worry about aging and death -- because if you believe in Jesus you have your future figured out - and it is eternal life with Christ! You are God's beloved one.

There was an article in the Appleton Post Crescent a few days ago about a problem that had occurred at a few churches in the Fond du Lac area - in fact it was a problem that merited a call to the police. What happened? Somebody stole the baby Jesus from the mangers in front of churches - that is right - the plastic doll in the nativity scenes around town had been taken. Whew. This is not a funny practical joke, but one can look at it in retrospect in this way: maybe that person or persons really needed Jesus. In fact, someone in the paper was quoted as saying, "**maybe they really needed Jesus!" We can laugh at this, but it is a good story for us all for this day.**  I have not heard if they caught the person who did this act of theft, but I do hope they met the real Jesus beginning on that day. Because of our fast pace, media-bombarded, internet and materialistic dominated society - we get confused about what is important, about what we actually need and don't need. We get to thinking that we have to have certain things, and we tend to forget what we really, really need - which is more of Jesus.

But wait, something doesn't make sense here. We look to lots of places for help in our challenging contemporary lives -- but we never think of looking to a **baby** for help! In our experience, babies are all about us helping them, and them being totally dependent upon us. Today, because this very special baby is God made man, it is the other way around. On this day, we look to baby Jesus with OUR arms outstretched to obtain life, to obtain salvation, to obtain help every day, from Him. On this day, the baby fingers of Jesus reach out to you - they are full of love more perfect than anything you understand, more accepting than you can conceive of. The secret of immortality is found by your reaching back to hold the baby fingers of Jesus reaching to you, and they will wrap around your life with pure security. New birth, new life comes to you when you say "yes" to Him.

Some people think that they have to get their life together, they have to fix things that are wrong in their life before they can come to God - before they become a member of a church. It doesn't work that way. This holiday we celebrate today is the holiday of peace, love, acceptance, and eternal life. St. Paul expressed this eloquently in our Epistle reading to Titus today, " ***When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."***  Come to Jesus with your messes and He will do the fixing; He is alive here today for you. ***"The angel of the Lord said...Do not be afraid, for see I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people; to you is born this day the Savior, the Messiah, the Lord....Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth people among those whom he favors."***  Jesus favors you- say "yes" to Him. Allow Jesus to be born in you today. **Amen.**