

# Midnight Mass of Christmas

25 December 2020

*When the bell rings, all stand and sing the hymn*

## Processional Hymn

Let us proceed in peace.

✠ **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTW4KjGJK0Y>

**O come, all ye faithful,  
Joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem;  
Come and behold him  
Born the King of Angels:**

*O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!*

**3 See how the Shepherds  
Summoned to his cradle,  
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh with  
We too will thither [lowly fear  
Bend our joyful footsteps:**

**4 Lo! star-led chieftains,  
Magi, Christ adoring,  
Offer him incense, gold, and myrrh;  
We to the Christ Child  
Bring our heart's oblations:**

**2 God of God,  
Light of Light,  
Lo! he abhors not the Virgin's womb;  
Very God,  
Begotten, not created:**

**5 Child, for us sinners  
Poor and in the manger,  
Fain we embrace thee, with awe and love;  
Who would not love thee,  
Loving us so dearly?**

**6 Sing, choirs of Angels,  
Sing in exultation,  
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;  
Glory to God  
In the Highest:**

**7 Yea, Lord, we greet thee  
Born this happy morning,  
Jesu, to thee be glory given;  
Word of the Father  
Now in flesh appearing:**

Adeste fideles (13th cent.)  
trans. Frederick Oakeley 1802–80

## Prayers at the Advent Wreath

Today we celebrate the gift of the Incarnation, Emmanuel, God with us. We celebrate the birth of Christ who is the Light of the World—a Light no darkness can extinguish. Christ's Light can enter any darkness and as members of the Body of Christ, we live in the Light of Christ.

*The Christ Candle is lit, and the Priest says:*

Loving God, we thank you for your mystery of the Incarnation—Emmanuel, God with us. Help us receive the Light of Christ in our hearts and share it generously and joyfully in our families and communities. We ask this in the name of the one born in Bethlehem, Jesus our Lord. **Amen**

## Lighting of the Christ Candle

## Blessing of the Crib

Let us pray.

God of every nation and people, from the very beginning of creation you have made manifest your love: when our need for a Saviour was great you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. To our lives he brings joy and peace, justice, mercy, and love.

Lord, ✠ bless this crib and bless all who look upon this manger; may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus, and raise our thoughts to him, who is God-with-us and Saviour of all, and who lives and reigns forever and ever. **Amen.**

*The crib is censed.*

## Entrance Antiphon

Let us all rejoice in the Lord, for our Saviour has been born in the world.  
Today true peace has come down to us from heaven.

## Greeting

✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

The grace and peace of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.  
**And also with you.**

*The Priest may briefly introduce the Mass of the day.*

## Penitential Act

*The choir sings*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hj2xbwtc0h8>

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.

*The priest, deacon, or another minister says*

Christ the grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all.

*Silence*

Let us bring our weaknesses and infirmities to the Lord,  
confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

*All say*

**Merciful God,  
our maker and our judge,  
we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,  
and in what we have failed to do:  
we have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves;  
we repent, and are sorry for all our sins.  
Father, forgive us.  
Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*The priest says:*

Almighty God,  
who has promised forgiveness  
to all who turn to him in faith:

pardon ✕ you and set you free from all your sins,  
strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in eternal life,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Hymn of Praise**

**Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to God's people on earth.  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
almighty God and Father,  
we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world:  
have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High,  
Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

### **Collect**

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who made this most holy night  
to shine with the brightness of your one true light:  
bring us, who have known the revelation of that light on earth,  
to see the radiance of your heavenly glory;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **THE LITURGY OF THE WORD**

### **Old Testament Reading**

**Isaiah 9.2–7**

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, an heir given to us; upon whose shoulders rests authority; and who is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace; whose authority shall grow continually. And there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and over David's kingdom, which will be established and upheld with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

For the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Responsorial Psalm**

Psalm 98

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3O57yufJqE>

- 1 O sing unto the Lord a new song : for he hath done marvellous things.
- 2 With his own right hand, and with his holy arm : hath he gotten himself the victory.
- 3 The Lord declared his salvation : his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.
- 4 He hath remembered his mercy and truth toward the house of Israel : and all the ends of the world have seen the salvation of our God.
- 5 Shew yourselves joyful unto the Lord, all ye lands : sing, rejoice, and give thanks.
- 6 Praise the Lord upon the harp : sing to the harp with a psalm of thanksgiving.
- 7 With trumpets also and shawms : O shew yourselves joyful before the Lord the King.
- 8 Let the sea make a noise, and all that therein is : the round world, and they that dwell therein.
- 9 Let the floods clap their hands, and let the hills be joyful together before the Lord : for he is come to judge the earth.
- 10 With righteousness shall he judge the world : and the people with equity.

**New Testament Reading**

**Titus 2.11-14**

A reading from the letter of Paul to Titus.

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who was given for us that we might be redeemed from all iniquity and purified, Jesus' own people, who are zealous for good deeds.

For the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel Acclamation**

**Luke 2.10-11**

Alleluia.

I proclaim to you good news of great joy:  
today a Saviour is born for us, Christ the Lord.

Alleluia.

**Gospel Reading**

**Luke 2.1–20**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

✠ **Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘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 in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!’

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.’ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

For the Gospel of the Lord,

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## Homily

### REFLECTION FOR CHRISTMAS

For Christmas there has been more spoken, written and sung than for just about any other great celebration in human history. There is so much material, including within the Scriptures which we can absorb, that it all becomes daunting.

Even the Scriptural accounts and references to the Birth of Christ are very rich so perhaps it is better for now just to reflect on what the essence of Christmas is all about. At Christmas time we celebrate the *past*, the *present* and the *future*.

We celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ in human history – “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” We can celebrate this *past* event with faith that Jesus the Son of God and Son of Man has entered our world, has left us his teaching and example, has established his Church and community of believers and has brought about the forgiveness of our sins.

We celebrate the *present*. We celebrate the presence of Christ in in Word and Sacrament in our lives now. We can celebrate the present wonderful miracles of the Sacraments with love. We know that Christ is with us, especially in the Mass and in the Scriptures and that our calling as followers of Christ is above all a calling to love other people.

We celebrate the *future*. We celebrate with hope that Christ will come again in glory and that there will be victory over evil and death. There is no need to fear the future. Ultimately, the future is in God’s hands, including our own deaths whenever they may happen.

Christmas celebrates the enormous love which God has for each one of us. He gave us his Son who eventually gave his own life for us all. Such love surely needs a response from us - as St John writes in 1 John 4:11, “If God has loved us so much we must have the same love for one another.”

In practical terms this means mending quarrels, seeking a neglected friend, sharing some treasure,

encouraging young people, keeping promises, welcoming strangers, respecting our planet and its beauty and wonder . . . There is so much we can do to show thanks to God. So many people celebrate Christmas in some way. We can hope and pray that the real spirit of Christmas lasts throughout the coming year.

## **Profession of Faith**

*All stand. On this day, it is customary to kneel at the reference to Christ's birth.*

Let us together affirm the faith of the Church:

**We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation,  
he came down from heaven;  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son  
is worshipped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism  
for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life for the world to come. Amen.**

## Prayers of the People

The joy of discovery  
in that moment  
when hope and expectation  
were gloriously met  
by the illumination of one bright star.

We cannot imagine  
what words were spoken by visitors  
or if first impressions  
left them somewhat confused.

Messiah, Saviour, a King  
born in the barest of palaces.

Yet they saw and fell down  
on their knees in adoration.  
Lord, they saw you and knew  
whom they had met.

As we meet around the crib  
draw us into that stable  
in our imagination.  
In the quiet moments of prayer  
this Christmas, that brief oasis  
from the events of the world  
bring alive to us  
the smell of the hay  
the sound of the animals  
the cry of a baby.

We pray...

For our leaders as they navigate a pathway through the COVID pandemic, for people in every nation as they struggle to come to terms with the changes brought about in their daily lives, especially at this season of celebration when many are separated from family and friends, we pray for courage and hope.

**Lord, shine the light of your love.**

For the church across the world, celebrating together your coming, we pray for faithfulness and hope.

**Lord, shine the light of your love.**

For those living with conflict and fear, suffering war, violence, detention, abuse, for those who find Christmas a time of despair and loneliness, for all who can see only darkness, we pray for comfort and hope.

**Lord, shine the light of your love.**

For those who are sick in mind, body or spirit, who find it difficult to enter into the wonder and anticipation of newness of life, we pray for healing and hope.

**Lord, shine the light of your love.**

For those who had died recently, and for those whose anniversary of death occurs at this time, we pray in the hope of eternal life.

**Lord, shine the light of your love.**

May we who have knelt at the manger  
Always have room to hold within ourselves  
The light of the Christ Child.

May we who have gazed on the face of God  
Learn to live fully, and to share freely  
All that we have and are.  
So may Emmanuel – God with us and for us -  
Be once more incarnate in the world.

### **Greeting of Peace**

We are the body of Christ.  
**God's Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
**And also with you.**

### THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

*All stand to sing the Offertory Hymn.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5vIYx4OffA>

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| <p><b>O little town of Bethlehem,<br/>How still we see thee lie!<br/>Above thy deep and dreamless sleep<br/>The silent stars go by.<br/>Yet in thy dark streets shineth<br/>The everlasting light;<br/>The hopes and fears of all the years<br/>Are met in thee tonight.</b></p> <p><b>2 O morning stars, together<br/>Proclaim the holy birth<br/>And praises sing to God the King<br/>And peace to men on earth;<br/>For Christ is born of Mary;<br/>And, gathered all above,<br/>While mortals sleep, the angels keep<br/>Their watch of wondering love.</b></p> | <p><b>3 How silently, how silently<br/>The wondrous gift is given!<br/>So God imparts to human hearts<br/>The blessings of his heaven.<br/>No ear may hear his coming;<br/>But in this world of sin,<br/>Where meek souls will receive him, still<br/>The dear Christ enters in.</b></p> <p><b>4 O holy child of Bethlehem,<br/>Descend to us, we pray;<br/>Cast out our sin, and enter in,<br/>Be born in us today.<br/>We hear the Christmas angels<br/>The great glad tidings tell:<br/>O come to us, abide with us,<br/>Our Lord Emmanuel.</b></p> |
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*When all is prepared, the priest says,*

Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours  
may be acceptable to God, the Father almighty.

**May the Lord accept our sacrifice  
for the praise and glory of God's name,  
for our good, and the good of all God's holy Church.**

### **Prayer over the Offerings**

Source of light and gladness,  
accept all we offer on this joyful feast.  
May we grow up in the One who unites our lives to yours;  
who is Lord now and for ever. **Amen.**

### **The Eucharistic Prayer**

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.  
**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

Worship and praise belong to you, God our maker.  
Out of nothing, you called all worlds into being,  
and still you draw the universe to its fulfilment.  
Day and night celebrate your glory  
till time shall be no more.

In Christ, your Word became flesh,  
and on this night was born of the Virgin Mary.  
He emptied himself, taking our human form,  
That through his incarnation and passion  
we might come to share in his divine nature.

Filled with the Spirit,  
who at the first Creation  
moved over the face of the waters,  
and overshadowed the blessed Virgin at Nazareth,  
we await with joy the fulfilment of your new Creation.

As children of your redeeming purpose  
who celebrate the birth of your Son,  
we offer you our praise,  
with angels and archangels  
and the whole company of heaven  
singing the hymn of your unending glory:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

Glory and thanksgiving be to you,  
most loving Father.  
In Jesus the Messiah you have come to us,  
and lived for a time among us,  
that we might for ever live with you.  
In the manger at Bethlehem,  
in his flight to Egypt,  
and as the carpenter's son,  
the Only-begotten bent low to meet us.

Obedient to your calling,  
he accepted death on the cross.  
When you exalted him on the third day,  
and bestowed on him the name above all names,  
he opened the gate of glory  
that we might be your children,  
and share in his kingdom of Peace.

Before he was given up to suffering and death,  
desiring to complete the work  
for which he came into the world,  
at supper with his disciples  
he took bread and offered you thanks.  
He broke the bread,  
and gave it to them, saying:  
"Take, eat.  
This is my Body: it is broken for you."

After supper, he took the cup,  
he offered you thanks,  
and gave it to them saying:  
"Drink this, all of you.  
This is my Blood of the new covenant;  
it is poured out for you, and for all,  
that sins may be forgiven.  
Do this in remembrance of me."

We now obey your Son's command.  
We recall his blessed passion and death,  
his glorious resurrection and ascension;  
and we look for the coming of his Kingdom.  
Made one with him, we offer you these gifts  
and with them ourselves,  
a single, holy, living sacrifice.

Hear us, most merciful Father,  
and send your Holy Spirit upon us  
and upon this bread and this wine,  
that, overshadowed by his life-giving power,  
they may be the Body and Blood of your Son,  
and we may be kindled with the fire of your love  
and renewed for the service of your Kingdom.

Help us, who are baptised into the fellowship of Christ's Body  
to live and work to your praise and glory;  
may we grow together in unity and love  
until at last, in your new creation,  
we enter into our heritage  
in the company of the Virgin Mary,  
the apostles, and prophets,  
and of all our brothers and sisters living and departed.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
with whom, and in whom,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory be to you,  
Lord of all ages,  
world without end. **Amen.**

## THE COMMUNION RITE

### The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray with confidence to the Father  
in the words our Saviour gave us:

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.**

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,  
graciously grant peace in our days,  
that, by the help of your mercy,  
we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress,  
as we await the blessed hope  
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.**

### The Breaking of the Bread

*The priest breaks the bread, saying*

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.  
We who are many are one body,  
**for we all share in the one bread.**

*While the bread is broken Agnus Dei is said.*

**Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.  
Jesus, Bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.  
Jesus, Redeemer of the world, grant us peace.**

## Invitation to Communion

Behold the Lamb of God,  
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.  
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

**Lord, I am not worthy to receive you,  
but only say the word, and I shall be healed.**

*All receive Holy Communion.*

*Communion will be administered in one kind only.*

*Communicants are asked to approach the priest in single file, maintaining physical distance, returning to their places via the side aisles.*

*Those who are not to receive the Blessed Sacrament are invited to unite themselves with Jesus by making a Spiritual Communion.*

## Act of Spiritual Communion

**St Alphonsus Liguori**

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the most Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there, and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

## Communion Antiphon

**John 1.14**

The Word became flesh: and we have seen his glory.

## Prayer after Communion

Let us pray.

God of heaven, dwelling among us,  
we thank you for feeding us with this holy food.  
By your grace keep us ever faithful  
to your Word made flesh  
that as the body of Christ in the world  
we may bring your presence to all people.  
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*All stand to sing the Postcommunion hymn.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtV477Cqni0>

**It came upon the midnight clear,  
That glorious song of old,  
From angels bending near the earth,  
To touch their harps of gold;  
“Peace on the earth, good will to men,  
From Heaven’s all gracious King.”  
The world in solemn stillness lay,  
To hear the angels sing.**

**3 Yet with the woes of sin and strife  
The world has suffered long;  
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled  
Two thousand years of wrong;  
And man, at war with man, hears not  
The love-song which they bring;  
O hush the noise, ye men of strife  
And hear the angels sing.**

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| <p>2 <b>Still through the cloven skies they come</b><br/> <b>With peaceful wings unfurled,</b><br/> <b>And still their heavenly music floats</b><br/> <b>O'er all the weary world;</b><br/> <b>Above its sad and lowly plains,</b><br/> <b>They bend on hovering wing,</b><br/> <b>And ever over its Babel sounds</b><br/> <b>The blessèd angels sing.</b></p> | <p>4 <b>For lo! the days are hastening on,</b><br/> <b>By prophet-bards foretold,</b><br/> <b>When with the ever circling years</b><br/> <b>Comes round the age of gold;</b><br/> <b>When peace shall over all the earth</b><br/> <b>Its ancient splendours fling,</b><br/> <b>And the whole world send back the</b><br/> <b>song</b><br/> <b>Which now the angels sing.</b></p> |
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Edmund Sears 1810-76

### Blessing and Dismissal

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**

May the God of infinite goodness,  
 who by the incarnation of his Son has driven darkness from the world  
 and by that glorious Birth has illumined this most holy night,  
 drive far from you the darkness of vice  
 and illumine your hearts with the light of virtue. **Amen.**

And may God, who wills that the great joy  
 of his Son's saving Birth  
 be announced to shepherds by the Angel,  
 fill your minds with the gladness he gives  
 and make you heralds of his Gospel. **Amen.**

And may God, who by the Incarnation  
 brought together the earthly and heavenly realm,  
 fill you with the gift of his peace and favour  
 and make you sharers with the Church in heaven. **Amen.**

And the blessing of almighty God,  
 the Father, the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit,  
 come down on you and remain with you for ever. **Amen.**

*The priest, deacon or another minister says,*

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

### Postlude

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1496033053916133>

*Dieu parmi nous* ('God with us') from "*La Nativité du Seigneur*"

Olivier Messiaen 1908-92