

1-11-2021

Christmas Midnight Mass - 25 December 2021

Joe Tedesco

Follow this and additional works at: <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy>



Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), and the [Liturgy and Worship Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Tedesco, Joe. "Christmas Midnight Mass - 25 December 2021." *Pastoral Liturgy* 52, no. 1 (2001): 1-6.
<https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol52/iss1/22>

This Liturgical Resource is brought to you by ResearchOnline@ND. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pastoral Liturgy by an authorized administrator of ResearchOnline@ND. For more information, please contact researchonline@nd.edu.au.





25 December 2021

The Nativity of the Lord Christmas Midnight Mass

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction

Tonight's liturgy is one of the most celebratory of the Christian calendar. The readings exclaim the exuberant wonder of God who multiplies our blessings, who lifts our burdens and brings peace to the world. Glory to God in the highest!

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, by your birth you brought hope to the world.
Lord, have mercy.

You came so that all people may be saved.
Christ, have mercy.

You are the Prince of Peace.
Lord, have mercy.

First Reading

Isaiah 9:1–6

Isaiah proclaims the ever-increasing blessings of the Lord. God whose reign is marked by righteousness, peace and freedom from oppression is promised to us in this joyous reading

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 95(96):1–3, 11–13

Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord (Lk 2:11)

The response to this psalm is taken from Luke's gospel but the verses are from psalm 95 where the rejoicing of heaven and earth are proclaimed. This event is not just about a humble baby born in Bethlehem; it is about the whole of creation crying out because justice will rule in the world.

Second Reading

Titus 2:11–14

St. Paul reminds us how we are to find the fullness of God's revelation celebrated this night. We are to live lives dedicated to the good, something made possible through Jesus' sacrificial love.

Gospel Reading

Luke 2:1–14

We are invited to join with majestic angels and lowly shepherds in celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ, Saviour of the world.

Reflection

Of the various masses available on Christmas Day, the Mass During the Night, also known as the Midnight Mass, presents to us some of the most familiar imagery of Christmas. We have the story of Mary and Joseph having to travel to Bethlehem due to the occasion of a Roman census. The lack of room at the inn most likely due to the swelling of numbers caused by the Roman decree. The subsequent birth of the child being laid in a manger followed by angels appearing to shepherds in joyous praise. The shepherds' visit following the angelic appearance in Luke 2:15-20 is the only thing that doesn't quite make it into tonight's Gospel reading – otherwise the classic Lukan narrative is near complete and well known.

The Lukan material forms the bulk of the content for many Christmas plays and nativity scenes. The practice at most vigil or night masses will be to place a baby (sometimes real where possible) in a manger in the church to mark the celebration. The visual elements allow us to hold the Christmas story in mind perhaps better than many other narratives from Scripture. Even those whose Christian practices may be sparse to non-existent would have some familiarity with these significant elements of the Christmas story (even if there are embellishments, conflation and imaginative additions included).

This itself causes us to reflect on this iconic story in a particular way. Like many scriptural narratives, this is not simply a story being told to us, but one that we are being invited to join in on. When the angels make their proclamation to the shepherds, they are effectively being told to go and see for themselves. God is doing something new, and the shepherds are not simply being told about it but are being invited to join in on the occasion itself; to have their story intertwine with Jesus'.

So, it is with us. We too are being invited not simply to hear the story from a detached stance, but to find our story within God's story that is being made known to us in a special and new way at Christmas time. We, following the shepherds, are invited to look on the face of God by looking on the face of an infant child.

God is imaged in all sorts of ways. Whether drawn from the Bible, legendary story, wider literature or any other number of sources, God can be and has been depicted in any number of ways. Typically, when people are asked to think about what God looks like, they may well go to images of a God of power, a Creator God, a God among the clouds or stars. When depicted in human form, the cliché mature, strong, bearded figure is not an uncommon image drawn – Michelangelo’s famous paintings being an example of this.

Less common is to imagine God as an infant child, vulnerable and entirely dependent. Certainly, the babe Christ Jesus is a well-represented artistic motif at all levels – drawn at Christmas time by many a school child and found in the highest artwork through the ages. Yet, when asked “what does God look like” most will not go to the infant child as a default. Nevertheless, that is what we’re being asked to hold in our minds this night.

When the shepherds are told of the Good News that “born today is the Messiah, the Lord” (2:11) it is a proclamation of God doing something magnificent and mighty for them and for all. But, at the same time, God who we witness today is coming not in recognisable power, but humility. God is for us, but God’s designs might be. God always invites us to join God in the process. The babe God also needs us. God never forces Godself onto us, regardless of how perfectly good in swaddling clothes is an invitation by God who, in a certain sense, needs humanity which his presence comes to save. Not in the philosophical or ontological sense, God, by definition, is ‘simply complete’ as classic theologians would put it. Nevertheless, in the plan of salvation, in God’s plan for God’s desire to show love and bring peace to the world, God invites us to recognise that God’s power is going to come through fundamental vulnerability – vulnerability that is necessary for human family and human community.

This makes total sense because God is not interested in autonomous individuating power. God’s very design for the fullness of life is predicated on our ability to form communities. Later, when Jesus begins his public ministry as an adult, he will begin and build it with a core group of followers, the apostles, and other disciples. Further, the Church that continues Jesus’ life-giving presence and mission is essentially a community that is known by its love of neighbour and of God.

Here at Christmas, that foundational dimension is laid out for us. A family, stripped of any luxury and pretence, presents to us what matters. They remain true and committed to each other and to care for the newborn baby in their midst; it is all that God ultimately needs. Shepherds, considered lowly and insignificant by society of the day, are invited to experience God’s joy and, thus, remind us that the ordinary matter in that sense too.

We don’t need to bring ostentation, any façade or worry about what the world thinks. We simply need to start by coming and looking and experiencing. We need not be afraid; look how vulnerable and humble our Lord is in front of us – an infant child on a cold night, well away from the comforts we sometimes think are essential. Hear then the invitation; look on God who is present among us and respond to the call to experience ‘great joy’ and ‘peace’ found through God and with each other.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

As we gather on this holy night, let us rejoice and be glad to receive the true light, Christ the Lord. Let us pray for the needs of our Church and the needs of the world.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis, bishops and all Christian leaders, that through the light of Christ, they may be able to lead the people of God to eternal life.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the members of the Plenary Council that they may continue to discern what God's wants of Australia and that the results may contribute fruitfully to the Synod in 2023.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of all nations, that their decisions are guided by the light of Christ so that they make fair decisions for all people in this time made difficult by the pandemic.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray that the light of Christ can shine in our parish and community during Christmas time and that we can see Christ in the poor and the marginalised. May we have a missionary focus, not one that is only about ourselves.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray that in this festive season we will not forget Christ, who is the reason for our celebrations, but keep him foremost in our minds and actions.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who suffer at Christmas because of loss or separation from loved ones, or from the trauma of domestic violence. May they find safety and peace in the care of those who love them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Father, we pray with confidence that you hear our prayers which we make through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA

Angels we have heard on high. French Carol. 268
Away in a manger. J. McFarland/ W. Kirkpatrick. 289
Hark! the herald angels sing. C. Wesley/ F. Mendelssohn. 294
Joy to the world. I. Watts/ G. F. Handel. 295
O come, all ye faithful. J. Wade. 287 (Verses 1-3)
O little town of Bethlehem. P. Brooks/ L. Redner. 296
Once in royal David's city. H. Gauntlett/ C. F. Alexander. 297
Silent night. J. Mohr/ F. Gruber. 290
The first Nowell. English text and melody. 298 (Verses 1, 2, 4 & 6)

AOV1

Hark! the herald angels sing. C. Wesley/ F. Mendelssohn. 171
Joy to the world. I. Watts/ G. F. Handel. 170
O come, all ye faithful. J. Wade. 167
Silent Night. J. Mohr/ F. Gruber. 168
The first Nowell. English text and melody. 169 (Verses 1, 2 & 5)
What child is this? W. C. Dix/ English melody. 165 (Verses 1-2)

AOV2

Angels we have heard on high. French Carol. 140
Sing we, sing we Noel. K. Poelker. 124

AOV4Kids

And did you see Him little star? C. Gibson/ H. Clyde. 60
Out on the road to Bethlehem. M. Nicol. 61
Baby lying in a manger. P. Combe. 63
Can this really be true? L. Newton/ T. Wittwer. 64

AOVNG

Emmanuel. Raymond Badham. 40
Let the season shine. Judy Bailey. 87

CWB

A child is born in Bethlehem. Tr. Ralph Wright OSB. 612
Angels we have heard on high. Tr. J. Chadwick. 622
Unto us a boy is born. Tr. Percy Dearmer. 849

CWBII

Angels we have heard on high. Tr. James Chadwick. 255
Good Christians all, rejoice. John Mason Neale. 261
The people who in darkness walked. John Morison. 272
Unto us a child is born! Tr. Percy Dearmer. 273

S&S1

Go, tell it on the mountain. Spiritual. 114

S&S2

Born this day. Ken Canedo. 296

Break forth, O beauteous heavenly light. Timothy R. Smith. 286

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 95: *Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.*

Psalm 95: David C. Isele/A Gregory Murray OSB. CWB 189

Psalm 96: Today is born our Saviour: Colin Smith. GA 56

Psalm 96 (95): Jenny O'Brien. JOBC pg. 16

Today is born our Saviour. LPSF Arr. Tony Alonso. pg.9

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Glory to God (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]

Glory, gloria (STAR) [CHILDREN, Gathering, Recessional]

Sing new songs of joy (FWS/CWB II) *based on Ps 97 (98)*

There is a child (TT/SYJ) *based on Is 9:1-7*

This little boy (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection - Gifts]

**You will find a baby
wrapped in swaddling
clothes lying
in a manger.**

