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25 December 2022

Nativity of the Lord Christmas Midnight Mass

Reflection by Anthony Doran

Pastoral Note

Since the third edition of the of the Roman Missal, the Christmas 'Midnight' Mass is now known as 'Mass During the Night'. While some parishes would celebrate a Mass using the prayers and readings of this Mass late in the evening of 24th December, many parishes would maintain the tradition of celebrating Mass at midnight on 25th December.

Introduction

Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord. We rejoice and give thanks for this light which has come into the world. In this Mass, in the dark of the night, we hear and pray and see – in the birth of Jesus – night giving way to day, light breaking through the darkness. We, who once walked in darkness, now walk in great light.

Penitential Act

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

Lord Jesus, you are the revelation of God. Lord have mercy.

You came to bring peace to the world. Christ have mercy.

You free us from all selfishness to live anew. Lord have mercy.

First Reading

Isaiah 9:1-7

Some of the best known and most compelling lines in all of Sacred Scripture are contained in this reading: a prophetic oracle of the light of a new-born king. While darkness means shadow and oppression, the light which this child born-for-us brings, means gladness and rejoicing and peace.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 95: 1-3. 11-13. R. Lk 2:11

Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.

This is a psalm of praise for the reign of God breaking into our world. With the birth – today – of the incarnate Son of God, all of creation joins in this song of praise.

Second Reading

Titus 2:11-14

The 'purpose' of the Christmas feast is explained to us in this reading – Christ Jesus, our God and saviour, reveals God's grace to us, thereby opening for us the way to salvation.

Gospel Reading

Luke 2:1-14

The Gospel Reading for this Mass During the Night tells what is perhaps the most well-known of all the stories in the Gospel. The child who is born – for whom there is no room – will bring God's Kingdom to birth, where there is room a-plenty for all.

Reflection

We are all very familiar with the Christmas story. In response to the call for the census, Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem – the town of David – to be registered there. While there, the time comes for Mary to have her child. And there is no room for them at the inn – no doubt because Bethlehem is crowded with other people who had journeyed there for the census.

And so Jesus is born in the stable. He is wrapped in swaddling clothes. And for a bed, they use the manger. The trough in which the feed for the animals in the stable would have been placed. And, in the fields surrounding Bethlehem, the shepherds hear choirs of angels announcing the birth of Jesus.

Little children in particular seem to know the story by heart. And they never get tired of the story being told and re-told. And when children draw their versions of the Christmas story – the stable at Bethlehem – no one is left out. Quite the contrary. When children draw the nativity scene, they tend to add figures. Certainly the result of inspiration and holy imagination. It seems quite natural to them to introduce into the scene people, animals, and objects from their own world. Sometimes, they even include themselves and those people who are dear to them. Is this simply childlike simplicity? On one level, yes.

But on another level, it is an understanding of the very heart of the Christmas story. Whatever the case, the nativity story which we read on this night is no fairy tale, but is certainly, as the angel says to the shepherds, 'news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.'

This news of great joy to be shared by all the people is the news that, in the birth of Jesus, our God comes to dwell with us. No longer is God distant and remote. No. In the Incarnation – the mystery of the birth of Christ – our God takes on our human flesh and shares our human life. In the birth of Jesus in the poverty and danger of the stable at Bethlehem, once and for all, God says that the power and wealth of the Augustus Caesars of this world matter no more. The true glory of the Kingdom of God lies in the powerless child of Bethlehem. And if this powerless child of Bethlehem is indeed our Mighty-God and Prince-of-Peace, then our poverty and

weakness is transformed and truly becomes the glory of God. Jesus shares our poverty and weakness so that we might share his glory. This is 'God's grace revealed to us.' This is why salvation is possible for the whole human race. Because Jesus Christ is Emmanuel, our God-with-us.

Around the world on this night, thousands of Christians will spend some time in prayer and meditation in front of a Christmas crib. From the Pope in Rome looking at the larger than life-size crib in St Peter's Square, to the smallest bush church, which might only have a small cardboard cut-out version. The ones I like the best are the ones which are open to the world. Why? The answer is simple. Like the drawings of the stable which children draw, we are there, too. The Christmas crib, the stable at Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus encompasses the whole of creation and the whole of human history. We are all participants in the Christmas story. We are all invited into the stable at Bethlehem. Yes, we are probably wedged in between animals and shepherds, in the messiness and beauty and wonder of our everyday lives. The crib should have no walls for there are no boundaries to the good news of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. There is no limit to our joy that Jesus Christ is born today – Jesus Christ, our-God-with-us. The angels proclaim it; the shepherds have passed on the story.

O come, let us adore him...God-with-us...Christ the Lord.

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



Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

As we gather to celebrate the Birth of our Saviour, Christ the Lord, let us open our hearts in prayer for the needs of our world and of our community.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis and all our Church leaders that they may continue to guide us into unity with you through the love they show for others. May the work of the Plenary Council be continued in its implementation.

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

We pray for leaders throughout the world that in justice they will allow all Christians to celebrate the Incarnation and demonstrate the importance of Jesus in their lives and the life of the world. May this help move our world towards peace.

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

We pray for the poor and marginalised. Give those around them the gifts of charity and compassion so that help may be authentic and valued.

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

We pray for all those gathered here. May we be a sign of Christ's glory and hope in the world.

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

We pray for children, that the Holy Spirit opens their minds and hearts to the message of Christmas through selfless giving and care of others.

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

We pray for those away from family during Christmas time that they experience God's love through the love and care of those around them and feel comfort in God's presence.

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

Conclusion

God of love, you reveal yourself to us fully in Jesus Christ. We celebrate the gift of your love and offer our prayers to you with faith in our hearts. We make our prayer through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus, your Son.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV1	AOV2	AOVK	AOVNG	GA	CWB	CWB II	S&S1	S&S2
A child is born in Bethlehem						612			
Angels we have heard on high		140			286	622	255		
Away in a manger					289		256		
Baby lying in a manger			63				257		
Born this day									296
Break forth, O beauteous heavenly light									286
Emmanuel				40					
Go, tell it on the mountain								114	
Good Christians all, rejoice						697	261		
Hark! The herald angels sing	171				294	704	262		
Joy to the world	170				295	728	265		
Let the season shine				87					
O come, all ye faithful (Verses 1-2)	167				287	760	267		
O little town of Bethlehem					296	772	266		
Of the Father's love begotten						779	268		
Once in royal David's city					297	782	269		
Silent night	168				290	803	270		
Sing we, sing we Nowell		124					271		
The first Nowell	169				298	822	280		
The people who in darkness walked							272		
Unto us a boy is born						849	273		
What child is this? (Verses 1-2)	165						275		

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

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

	CWB	GA	JOBA	LPSF
Psalm 85	189	56	pg. 18	pg. 9

Music selections by Michael Mangan

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

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

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