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Christmas Midnight - 24 December 2024

Andrew Doohan

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25 December 2024

The Nativity of the Lord Christmas Midnight Mass

Reflection by Andrew Doohan

Introduction

In our readings for this Mass, we hear both the prophetic promise of a new king who will bring deliverance to God's people, and the birth of Jesus, fulfilling that promise. The traditional Christmas story is rehearsed, but for people of faith, it is not just a story, but God's promise brought to fruition.

These texts may also be used at the Vigil Mass for pastoral reasons.

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 9:1–7

The prophet Isaiah praises God for the expected new King who will bring deliverance to God's people. The text ends with those mighty names to be given to the new King; names that Handel used so well!

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 95(96):1–3, 11–13

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

The psalm used tonight highlights God's sovereignty, to which the whole world, the heavens and the earth, are invited to sing praise. The refrain, taken from Luke's Gospel, is the refrain of the angels as they announce the arrival of Jesus the Lord.

Second Reading

Titus 2:11–14

In writing to Titus, Paul reminds him—and us—of the reason we are called to live a life in right relationship with God: God has already brought deliverance to God's people in Jesus Christ, and now we await his coming again.

Gospel Reading

Luke 2:1–14

Luke recounts the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, from the required travel of Joseph and Mary to the arrival of the Christ Child in a stable and the appearance of an angelic choir to shepherds. This recounting of events reminds us of the beginning of our salvation as God had promised from of old.

Reflection

After being absent since the beginning of Advent, our voices pierce the darkness of this night as they join the song of the angels: 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to all who enjoy God's favour!' It is right that such a song of praise should be on our lips tonight as we gather to celebrate God's gracious self-gift in the Incarnation.

Tonight, we are reminded of the events of that first Christmas night, when Jesus was born of Mary in the meagre setting of a stable in Bethlehem. Tonight, we are reminded that the first proclamation of this 'Good News' was not to the high and mighty of society but to shepherds at work in the fields. Tonight, we are reminded that our Saviour, Christ the Lord, has been born.

And this last reminder, the one proclaimed by angels as heard in the Gospel proclaimed tonight and the Psalm we have sung, should give us pause.

What we celebrate tonight cannot be limited to the nice, safe, sometimes overly sanitised 'Christmas Story' that marketing agencies might seek to make it. If we profess ourselves to be people of faith, this event, which echoes down across the years to this very night, has consequences that make a claim on us and the way we live.

Because God has chosen to deliver humanity from itself by taking on human flesh and living among us. God has chosen to live among us to save us not as a mighty warrior but as a helpless child. God's work of salvation has begun as a child; a child who became a man, a man who became a prophetic voice, a man who would suffer and die and be raised again so that God's promise of salvation might become a reality.

On this holy night, we hear the beginning of a journey that will ultimately take the child whose birth we witness to the mountain of Calvary. In greater or lesser detail, we know those things that take place between those two events. And, because we are people of faith, we hold all these things together and seek to live out our lives in response day-to-day.

It cannot be as simple as staying in Bethlehem. It cannot be as simple as raising our voices alongside the angels, as wonderful as that is on a night like this. It cannot be as simple as staying nice or safe.

On this holy night, we hear the beginning of a journey that will unfold beyond Bethlehem, beyond shepherds, and beyond angelic choirs. On this holy night, we join ourselves to that journey; the journey that will demand something of us.

And all because God loves us and is faithful to the promise made to God's People.



*Glory to
God in the
highest.*

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

The timeless manner of salvation from God calls us to offer all our needs in prayer.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis and all the leaders of our Church. May they, through their lives, witness to the glory of God who became human in Jesus.

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

We pray for world leaders. May they be inspired to resolve differences through diplomacy and not violent conflict.

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

We pray for all those who suffer from violence and fear. May this special feast of the Prince of Peace become open to their minds and hearts so that they can live in safety.

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

We pray for Christians throughout the world who are persecuted, especially those in Bethlehem. May God's peace become evident to them so they remain strong in faith.

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

We pray for our community gathered here. May our celebrations of the birth of Jesus be truly focused on peace, love and joy.

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

We pray for all those who grieve during this special family time. May they know in their hearts that God draws us all into eternal divine perfection and therefore find peace and strength.

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

Conclusion

God of tender love, hear these prayers that we offer and all those still silent in our hearts and grant them according to your will. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) Midnight Mass (25 December 2024)

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

Title	AOVNG	S&S1	S&S2
Born this day			296
Break forth, O beauteous heavenly light			286
Emmanuel	40		
Go, tell it on the mountain		114	
Let the season shine	87		

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

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

	CWB	GA	JOBB	LPSF
Psalm 85	189	56	pg. 16	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]