

**MIDNIGHT MASS****ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

The Lord said to me: You are my Son.  
It is I who have begotten you this day.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

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

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**

O God, who have made this most sacred night  
radiant with the splendour of the true light,  
grant, we pray, that we, who have known the  
mysteries of his light on earth,  
may also delight in his gladness in heaven.  
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**FIRST READING**

Is 9:1-7

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

**PSALM**

Ps 95

Response:

Today a saviour has been born to us:  
he is Christ the Lord.

**SECOND READING**

Tt 2:11-14

A reading from the letter of St Paul to Titus.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!

I bring you news of great joy:  
today a saviour has been born to us, Christ  
the Lord.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

Lk 2:1-14

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
Luke.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

*(all bow during the next two lines)*

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the  
Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living  
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting. Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

May the oblation of this day's feast  
be pleasing to you, O Lord, we pray,  
that through this most holy exchange  
we may be found in the likeness of Christ, in  
whom our nature is united to you.  
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

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

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God,  
that we, who are gladdened by participation  
in the feast of our Redeemer's Nativity,  
may through an honourable way of life  
become worthy of union with him.  
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

**DAWN MASS****ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Today a light will shine upon us, for the Lord  
is born for us;  
and he will be called Wondrous God,  
Prince of peace, Father of future ages:  
and his reign will be without end.

**COLLECT**

Grant, we pray, almighty God,  
that, as we are bathed in the new radiance of  
your incarnate Word,  
the light of faith, which illumines our minds,  
may also shine through in our deeds.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**FIRST READING**

Is 62:11-12

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

**PSALM**

Ps 96

Response:

This day new light will shine upon the earth:  
the Lord is born for us.

**SECOND READING**

Tt 3:4-7

A reading from the letter of St Paul to Titus.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!

Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and peace to men who enjoy his favour.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

Lk 2:15-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
Luke.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

May our offerings be worthy, we pray, O Lord,  
of the mysteries of the Nativity this day,  
that, just as Christ was born a man and also  
shone forth as God,  
so these earthly gifts may confer on us what  
is divine.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

Rejoice, O Daughter Sion; lift up praise,  
Daughter Jerusalem:

Behold, your King will come, the Holy One  
and Saviour of the world.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Grant us, Lord, as we honour with joyful  
devotion  
the Nativity of your Son,  
that we may come to know with fullness of  
faith  
the hidden depths of this mystery  
and to love them ever more and more.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**MASS DURING THE DAY****ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

A child is born for us, and a son is given to us;  
his sceptre of power rests upon his shoulder,  
and his name will be called Messenger of  
great counsel.

**COLLECT**

O God, who wonderfully created the dignity  
of human nature  
and still more wonderfully restored it,  
grant, we pray,  
that we may share in the divinity of Christ,  
who humbled himself to share in our  
humanity.  
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**FIRST READING**

Is 52:7-10

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

**PSALM**

Ps 97

Response:

All the ends of the earth have seen the  
salvation of our God.

**SECOND READING**

Heb 1:1-6

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!

A hallowed day has dawned upon us.  
Come, you nations, worship the Lord,  
for today a great light has shone down upon  
the earth.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

Jn 1:1-18

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
John.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Make acceptable, O Lord, our oblation on this  
solemn day,  
when you manifested the reconciliation  
that makes us wholly pleasing in your sight  
and inaugurated for us the fullness of divine  
worship.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

All the ends of the earth have seen the  
salvation of our God.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Grant, O merciful God,  
that, just as the Saviour of the world, born  
this day,  
is the author of divine generation for us,  
so he may be the giver even of immortality.  
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
Amen.



## THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL

(JOHN 1:1-18)

The stories on which we have been reflecting over the past few weeks from the accounts of Matthew and Luke focus on the conception and birth of the Son of God.

The writer of the Fourth Gospel, whom we usually call 'John', begins his presentation of Jesus and his message with a profound reflection on the mystery of the Word which existed with God from the very beginning and took flesh as a human being in the person of Jesus. The Evangelist expressed this as 'pitching his tent among us'. But why? Jesus is God's Word, God's invitation to human beings to accept their true nature as children of God. This is an offer, not a demand. Throughout Israel's history, God reached out to the people, offering a covenant, a relationship of sharing life and love, not for any merit on their part, but simply out of God's free choice. When the people fell short in their living out of the covenant, God always offered the chance of being forgiven and renewing the bond.

In the person of Jesus, we see God's ultimate offer of such a relationship: not one of duty or obligation, but a free response on our part to what God has done for us in reaching out in this way. God is presenting us with a gift: it is up to us to accept or refuse it on an ongoing basis, not just once and for all. ■

### LEARN

There is no infancy narrative, no story of the conception and birth of Jesus, in the Gospel according to John.

Jesus as the Word of God corresponds to the female figure of Wisdom in the Jewish Hebrew and Greek Scriptures.

The Feast of Christmas replaced the pagan Roman festival of Saturnalia: that is why it is celebrated in December.

### SAY

**Thank you, God, for the gift of your Word to me.**

### DO

As you unwrap your present, think of the person who gave it to you and their reason for doing so. Then remember Jesus in the crib as God's present to you and God's reason for sending you this gift.



### REFLECT

Christmas is very much a time for giving presents. Most homes have a tree under which the brightly-wrapped gifts are laid awaiting the excitement of being opened on Christmas Day. Gifts are important, not necessarily because of what they are but because of what they mean. If we suspect that someone is giving us a present out of a sense of obligation, then the object itself will not be of much interest to us. But if we realise that something, maybe apparently of little objective value, is an expression of love and affection, then it is something we are likely to treasure for a long time.

Today, we celebrate God's greatest gift to us, that of God's love in the person of Jesus. This is not a gift that we are supposed to put away safely in a cupboard and bring out every Christmas and Easter, but one which should be part of our daily life, a gift that we refer to as our faith. The old Catechism described faith as "a response to revelation": at the feast of the Nativity (the birth) of the Lord, we are again presented with God's clearest statement of the Word, and we are invited to respond once more as grateful disciples of Jesus.

Our faith is not something static, a set of statements which we recite in the Creed: it is a living, developing relationship with the Lord. If we think of it as a gift, it is more like a plant than a picture. Or, we might think of it as a Russian doll: each time we open it, there is another one inside, but we have to open it to discover the next layer. As we look at the Christmas crib scene, we might remember that we are being invited to become part of the mystery which we contemplate. ■