

Nativity of the Lord – Solemnity of Christmas

† Friday, 25 December 2020

Midnight – Mass of Christmas



In England & Wales

Cycle of Prayer: Openness to the word of God

Keynote: Joy! For the child is born who brings hope to the downtrodden!

Prophet Isaiah 9: 1-7

'The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone.' What marvellous words of hope from this prophet of old! This text maybe an ancient hymn of thanksgiving upon the occasion of the accession of a new king, but here it is applied in Christian faith to the coming of Christ. *'For there is a child born for us, a son given to us... this is the name they give him: Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace.'*

The weapons of war are now to be put aside, and the people are to enter into the era of peace, for the child that is born brings healing and freedom to a people that walked in darkness. They are glad! For from this time onwards and forever, *'the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light... you have made their joy increase; they rejoice in your presence.'*

Responsorial Psalm 95 (96) – A song of welcome to the reign of God

Letter of Paul to Titus 2: 11-14

Paul writing to his fellow missionary, Titus, reminds him and us: *'God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race.'* The apostle urges us: *'to give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our worldly ambitions; we must be self-restrained and live good religious lives here in this present world, while we are waiting for the blessing which will come with the Appearing of the glory of our great God and saviour Christ Jesus.'*

A fitting reminder to us that centring our lives on Christ is what Christmas is all about.

Gospel according to Luke 2: 1-14

The evangelist Luke in setting the historical scene, relates how the Good News of the birth of the promised Messiah, is announced with joy and appropriately enough all this takes place at Bethlehem in Judea, the ancestral home of the great king David. The story may be familiar – all-to-familiar – but the underlying good news and the reality is what is important: *'Mary... gave birth to a son, her first-born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn.'*

But this news, in the first instance is announced not to mighty kings, nor to rich princes, nor the learned teachers of the temple, but instead and unexpectedly, it is proclaimed to the poor unlettered shepherds, who in their time were treated as unwelcome outcasts, like refugees, gypsy travellers, or homeless people in our own time for by keeping the sheep they were deemed to be ritually unclean. Yet the message is for everyone, outcasts as well! *'Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today... a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.'*

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NOTE – Masses celebrated at Dawn or during the Day each have their own readings from the Lectionary.