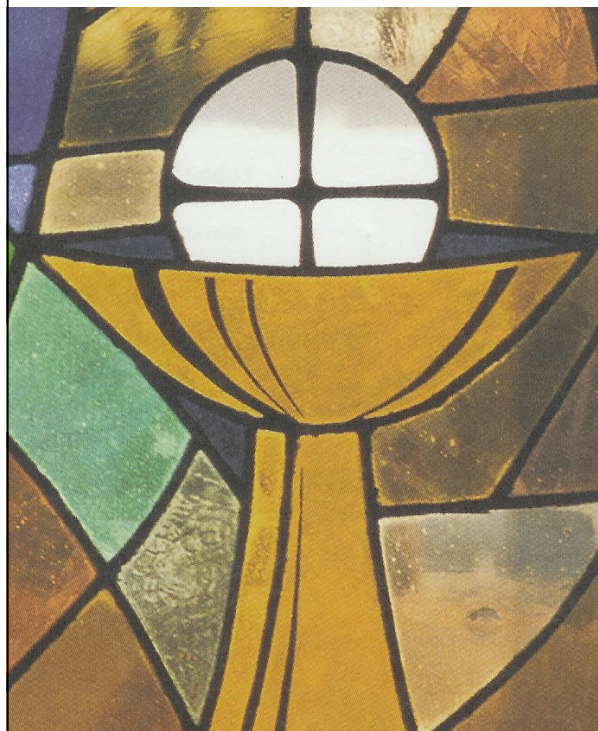




St. Luke's Church
Maidenhead

Holy Communion at Christmas: 'Midnight Mass'



Introduction to the Season

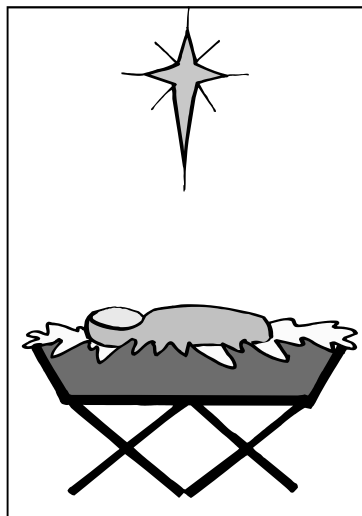
The celebration of Christ's incarnation at Christmas is one of the two poles of the Christian year. The wonderful mystery of God's dwelling among us in the fullness of humanity, as Emmanuel, foretold by the prophets and born of Mary, provides the material of the feast:

Hark, hark, the wise eternal word,
like a weak infant cries!
In form of servant is the Lord,
and God in cradle lies. (*Thomas Pestel*)

Christmas is much more than simply the celebration of Jesus' birth. The task of the Christmas liturgy is to recall us, amid all the joyful customs and celebrations of Christmas, to the central truth of the Word made flesh for our salvation.

It is, of course, Christ's nativity that has provided the occasion for this festival of the incarnation, since the end of the third century. The Christmas crib and the nativity play can both be said to descend from the tableau of Christ's birth that Francis of Assisi arranged when he celebrated Christmas at Greccio in 1223. Christmas carols are a medieval tradition, which has been notably developed from the end of the nineteenth century.

The Christmas season is often celebrated for twelve days, ending with the Epiphany. Contemporary use has sought to express an alternative tradition, in which Christmas lasts for a full forty days, ending with the Feast of the Presentation on 2 February.



The Gathering

*We stand and sing a hymn as the choir
and ministers enter.*

Hymn

The president standing at the crib says

Welcome all wonders in one sight!
Eternity shut in a span.
Summer in winter, day in night,
heaven in earth and God in man.
Great little one whose all-embracing
birth
brings earth to heaven,
stoops heaven to earth.

The Greeting

The president greets the people

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you

All **and also with you.**

Blessing of the Crib

Dear friends, as we meet to celebrate
the birth of Christ, let us pray that
God will bless this crib, that all who
worship his Son, born of the Virgin
Mary, may come to share his life in glo-
ry.

God our Father,
on this night
your Son Jesus Christ was born of the
Virgin Mary
for us and for our salvation;
bless this crib which we have prepared
to celebrate that holy birth;
may all who see it be strengthened in
faith,
and receive the fullness of life he came
to bring;
who is alive and reigns for ever.

All **Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

*The president invites the people to
Confession, saying*

Christ the Light of the World has
come to dispel the darkness of our
hearts.

In his light let us examine ourselves and
confess our sins.

We sit or kneel

Silence is kept.

God our Father,
you sent your Son full of grace and
truth:
forgive our failure to receive him.
Lord, have mercy.

All **Lord, have mercy**

Jesus our Saviour,
you were born in poverty and laid in a
manger:
forgive our greed and rejection of your
ways.
Christ, have mercy.

All **Christ, have mercy.**

Spirit of Love,
your servant Mary responded joyfully
to your call:
forgive the hardness of our hearts.
Lord, have mercy.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

The president says

May the God of all healing and
forgiveness
draw you to himself,
and cleanse you from all your sins
that you may behold the glory of his
Son,
the Word made flesh,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

We stand to sing the Gloria

Gloria in Excelsis

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the
Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the
Father:
receive our prayer.
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.

The Collect

*The president introduces a period of silent
prayer, saying*

Let us pray in the peace of this
Christmas celebration that our joy in
the birth of Christ will last for ever.

Eternal God,
who made this most holy night
to shine with the brightness of your
one true light:
bring us, who have known the
revelation of that light on earth,
to see the radiance of your heavenly
glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our
Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

¶ *The Liturgy of the Word*

We sit for the readings

Readings

At the end of each:
This is the word of the Lord.

All **Thanks be to God.**

Hymn

We stand to sing the hymn

Gospel Reading

We remain standing and turn towards the reading of the Gospel.

This acclamation heralds the Gospel reading:

Today Christ is born:

All **Alleluia!**

Today the Saviour has come:

All **Alleluia!**

Today the angels sing on earth:

All **Alleluia!**
Glory to God in the highest!

When the Gospel is announced the reader says

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

All **Glory to you, O Lord.**

At the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

We sit down for the sermon

The Creed

We all stand to say

All **We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he
came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit
and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of
the Father.
He will come again in glory to
judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father
and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the
prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic
and
apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for
the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of
the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

We kneel or sit for the prayers.

Father, in this holy night your Son our
Saviour
was born in human flesh.
Renew your Church as the Body of
Christ.
Holy God

All **hear our prayer.**

In this holy night there was no room
for your Son in the inn.
Protect with your love those who have
no home
and all who live in poverty.
Holy God

All **hear our prayer.**

In this holy night Mary in the pain of
labour brought your Son to birth.
Hold in your hand all who are in pain
or distress.
Holy God

All **hear our prayer.**

In this holy night your Christ came as a
light shining in the darkness.
Bring comfort to all who suffer in the
sadness of our world.
Holy God

All **hear our prayer.**

In this holy night the angels sang 'Peace
to God's people on earth'.
Strengthen those who work for peace
and justice
in all the world.
Holy God

All **hear our prayer.**

In this holy night shepherds in the field
heard good tidings of joy.
Give us grace to preach the gospel of
Christ's redemption.
Holy God

All **hear our prayer.**

In this holy night strangers found the
Holy Family,
and saw the baby lying in the manger.
Bless our homes and all whom we love.
Holy God

All **hear our prayer.**

In this holy night heaven is come down
to earth,
and earth is raised to heaven.
Keep in safety all those who have
passed through death
in the hope of heaven.
Holy God

All **hear our prayer.**

In this holy night Christians the world
over celebrate his birth.
Open our hearts that he may be born
in us today.
Holy God

All **hear our prayer.**

Father,
in this holy night angels and shepherds
worshipped at the manger throne.
Receive the worship we offer in
fellowship with Mary, Joseph and the
saints
through him who is your Word made
flesh,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.

All **Amen.**

¶ *The Liturgy of the Sacrament*

The Peace

Stand

The president, standing at the altar, says

This holy night the angels sang
'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to all in whom he
delights'. *Luke 2.14*

The peace of the Lord be always with
you

All **and also with you.**

Let us offer one another a sign of
peace.

All may exchange a sign of peace.

Preparation of the Altar Taking of the Bread and Wine

Hymn

*All sing the hymn, during which the gifts of
the people are gathered and presented,
and the high altar is prepared and bread
and wine are placed upon it.*

Word made flesh, life of the world,
in your incarnation you embraced our
poverty:
by your Spirit may we share in your
riches.

All **Amen.**

We remain standing

*The opening of the Eucharistic prayer is
sung*

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord is here.

All **His Spirit is with us.**

Lift up your hearts.

All **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All **It is right to give thanks and praise.**

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere,

mighty creator, ever-living God.

We give you thanks and praise for your Son,

our Saviour Jesus Christ,

who for love of our fallen race humbled himself,

and on this night was born of the Virgin Mary

by the power of your Spirit,

and lived as one of us.

In this mystery of the Word made flesh

you have caused his light to shine in our hearts,

to give knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

In him we see our God made visible

and so are caught up in the love of the God we cannot see.

Therefore with all the angels of heaven

we lift our voices to proclaim the glory of your name

and sing our joyful hymn of praise:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might..

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord

Hosanna in the highest.

We praise and bless you, loving Father,

through Jesus Christ, our Lord;

and as we obey his command,

send your Holy Spirit,

that broken bread and wine outpoured

may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends

and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:

Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;

do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.

Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:

Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice
made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup
of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All **Christ has died:
Christ is risen:
Christ will come again.**

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.
Through Christ, and with Christ,
and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours,
O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All **Amen.**

We sit or kneel

The Lord's Prayer

Rejoicing in the presence of God here
among us,
let us pray as our Saviour has taught us

All **Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin
against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

The president breaks the consecrated bread.

We break the bread of life,
and that life is the light of the world.

All **God here among us,
light in the midst of us,
bring us to light and life.**

We sing the Agnus Dei

**Jesus, Lamb of God,
Have mercy on us.**

**Jesus, bearer of our sins,
Have mercy on us.**

**Jesus, redeemer of the world,
Give us your peace.**

Giving of Communion

*The president says the invitation to
communion*

Christ is the true bread which has come
down from heaven

All **Lord, give us this bread always.**

The president and people receive communion.

*You will be invited up to the altar rails.
Communicant members of all churches are
welcome to receive communion.
If you do not wish to receive communion you
are very welcome to come to altar rail for a
blessing. Please bring this booklet with you to
indicate this.*

These words of distribution are used

The body of Christ, broken for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

and the communicant replies

Amen

*During the distribution the choir may sing an
anthem and we may all sing a hymn*

Prayer after Communion

We sit or kneel and keep silence

The Post Communion prayer is said:

God our Father,
in this night you have made known to us
again
the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:
confirm our faith and fix our eyes on him
until the day dawns
and Christ the Morning Star rises in our
hearts.
To him be glory both now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

We all say

All **Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son
Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls
and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out
in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.**

¶ *The Dismissal*

We stand, as the president gives the blessing

May the Father,
who has loved the eternal Son
from before the foundation of the
world,
shed that love upon you his children.

All **Amen.**

May Christ,
who by his incarnation gathered into
one
things earthly and heavenly,
fill you with joy and peace.

All **Amen.**

May the Holy Spirit,
by whose overshadowing Mary be-
came the God-bearer,
give you grace to carry the good news
of Christ.

All **Amen.**

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spir-
it,
be among you and remain with you
always.

All **Amen.**

Hymn

*We remain standing to sing the hymn.
During this the choir and ministers leave,
we turn and face the back of the church.*

Go in peace. Proclaim the Word made
flesh.

All **Glory, thanks and praise to God.**

***A very
happy Christmas
to you all!***

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