

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING Isaiah 9:1-7 *A child has been born for us; a son given to us.*

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shone. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 96:1-2.3-4.11-12.13 *R. Luke 2:11 Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.*

O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name; Tell of his salvation from day to day. **R.**

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous works among all the peoples. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods. **R.**

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy. **R.**

Rejoice before the Lord; for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth. **R.**

SECOND READING Titus 2:11-14 *The grace of God has appeared to all.*

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Luke 2:10-11 Alleluia, alleluia! Good news and great joy to all the world: today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord. Alleluia!

GOSPEL Luke 2:1-16 *To you is born this day a Saviour, who is the Messiah.*

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!" When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.



COMMUNION ANTIPHON Jn 1:14 The Word became flesh, and we have seen his glory.



Christmas Night Mass Year B 24th Dec 2017—Issue No. 252 A

THE MYSTERY OF WALKING AND SEEING

1. The prophecy of Isaiah - "*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light*" (Is 9:1) moves us, especially when we hear it proclaimed in the liturgy of tonight, because it states the deep reality of what we are: a people who walk, and all around us – and within us as well – there is darkness and light. In this night, as the spirit of darkness enfolds the world, there takes place anew the event which always amazes and surprises us: the people who walk see a great light. A light which makes us reflect on this mystery: the mystery of *walking* and *seeing*.

The verb "**Walk**" makes us reflect on the long journey which is the history of salvation, starting with Abraham, our father in faith, whom the Lord called to go forth from his country towards the land which he would show him. From that time on, our identity as believers has been that of a people making its pilgrim way towards the promised land. This history has always been accompanied by the Lord! He is ever faithful to his covenant and to his promises. "*God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.*" (1 Jn 1:5) Yet on the part of the people there are times of both light and darkness, fidelity and infidelity, obedience, and rebellion; times of being a pilgrim people and times of being a people adrift.

In our personal history too, there are both bright and dark moments, lights and shadows. If we love God and our brothers and sisters, we walk in the light; but if our heart is closed, if we are dominated by pride, deceit, self-seeking, then darkness falls within us and around us. "*Whoever hates his brother*" – writes the Apostle John – "*is in the darkness; he walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has blinded his eyes*" (1 Jn 2:11).

2. On this night, like a burst of brilliant light, "*God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race.*" (Tit 2:11)

And the grace which was revealed in our world is Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, true man and true God. He has entered our history; he has shared our journey. He came to free us from darkness and to grant us light. In him was revealed the grace, the mercy, and the tender love of the Father: Jesus is Love incarnate. He is not simply a teacher of wisdom, he is not an ideal for which we strive while knowing that we are hopelessly distant from it. He is the meaning of life and history, who has pitched his tent in our midst.

3. The shepherds were the first to see this "tent", to receive the news of Jesus' birth. They were the first because they were among the last, the outcast. They were the first because they were awake, keeping watch in the night, guarding their flocks.

Together with them, let us pause before the Child in silence. Together with them, let us thank the Lord for having given Jesus to us. Together with them, let us raise from the depths of our hearts the praises of his fidelity, because he, the Lord God most high, has lowered himself for our sake. "*Lord God, you are immense, and you made yourself small; you are rich and you made yourself poor; you are all-powerful and you made yourself vulnerable.*"

On this night let us share the joy of the Gospel: God so loves us that he gave us his Son to be light in our darkness. To us the Lord repeats: "*Do not be afraid!*" (Lk 2:10). And I too repeat: Do not be afraid! Our Father is patient, he loves us, he gives us Jesus to guide us on the way which leads to the promised land. Jesus is the light who brightens the darkness. He is our peace. Amen.

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Reconciliation at 4.00pm
1st Saturday of the month.

Baptism Preparation at
7pm 1st Thurs of the month.