

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING Isaiah 52:7-10 *All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6 R. All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things. His right hand and his holy arm have brought him victory. R.

The Lord has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. R.

All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God. Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises. R.

Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody. With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord. R.

SECOND READING Hebrews 1:1-6 *In these last days God has spoken to us by the Son.*

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: Alleluia, alleluia! A holy day has dawned upon us. Come you nations, and adore the Lord. Today a great light has come upon the earth. Alleluia!

GOSPEL John 1:1-18 *The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory.*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'" From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON Ps 97:18: All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.



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A Child Lying in a Manger

If we want to celebrate Christmas authentically, if we really want to find Jesus, we need to do what the shepherds did: we need to discover the mystery of this Holy Day in the Child given to us, the love of God made visible. We need to realize that all his glory, all his joy, all his light, converges to a single point, the sign that the angel indicated to the shepherds: "You will find a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" (Lk 2:12). We need to contemplate this sign: the frail simplicity of a tiny newborn child, the meekness with which he is placed in a manger, the tender affection with which he is wrapped in his swaddling clothes. That is where God is, the God who comes to us in the poverty of a stable, in simplicity of life, in astonishing smallness,

In order to meet him, we need to go where he is, and bow down, and humble ourselves, and make ourselves small. The newborn Child calls us to leave behind fleeting illusions and to turn to what is essential, to abandon our endless yearning for things we will never have. We do well to leave such things behind, in order to discover, in the simplicity of the divine Child, peace, joy and the luminous meaning of life.

Let us allow the Child in the manger to challenge us, but let us also be challenged by all those children in today's world who are lying not in a crib, caressed with affection by their mothers and fathers, but in squalid mangers that devour dignity. Children who hide underground to escape bombardment, on the pavements of large cities, in the hold of a boat overladen with immigrants... Let us allow ourselves to be challenged by those children who are not allowed to be born, by those who cry because no one relieves their hunger, by those who hold in their hands not toys, but weapons.

The mystery of Christmas is at once a *mystery of hope and of sadness*. It has a *taste of sadness*, in as much as love is not accepted, and life discarded. Such was the case with Joseph and Mary, who met with closed doors, "because there was no place for them in the inn." Jesus was born rejected by some and regarded by many others with indifference. Today too, that same indifference still exists, whenever Christmas becomes a holiday with ourselves at the centre rather than Jesus; when the lights of shop windows push the light of God into the shadows; when we are enthused about gifts but indifferent to our neighbours in need. This worldliness has kidnapped Christmas; we need to liberate it!

Yet Christmas has above all a *taste of hope* because he is born in Bethlehem, which means "house of bread." In this way, he tells us that he is born as *bread for us*; he enters our life to give us his life; he comes into our world to give us his love. He does not come to devour or to lord it over us, but instead to feed and serve us.

The shepherds understood this. They were among the marginalized of those times. Yet no one is marginalized in the sight of God, and that Christmas, they themselves were the guests. May we too be challenged and called by Jesus. Let us approach him with trust, starting from all those things that make us feel marginalized, from our limitations and our sins. Let us be touched by the tenderness that saves. Let us draw close to God who draws close to us. Let us pause to gaze upon the crib, and relive in our imagination the birth of Jesus: light and peace, dire poverty and rejection.

With the shepherds, let us enter into the real Christmas, bringing to Jesus all that we are, our alienation, our unhealed wounds, our sins. Then, in Jesus, we will enjoy the taste of the true spirit of Christmas: the beauty of being loved by God. With Mary and Joseph, let us pause before the manger, before Jesus who is born as bread for my life. Contemplating his humble and infinite love, let us simply tell him: Thank you. Thank you because you have done all this *for me*.

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Reconciliation at 4.00pm
1st Saturday of the month.
Baptism Preparation at
7pm 1st Thurs of the month.