

# Christmas Eve Mass 2023

**Nativity of the Lord (Christmas Eve)**

**24 December**

## First Reading *Is 9:1-7*

*A Reading from the Prophet Isaiah.*

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.  
You have made their gladness greater,  
you have made their joy increase;  
they rejoice in your presence  
as men rejoice at harvest time,  
as men are happy when they are dividing the  
spoils.  
For the yoke that was weighing on him,  
the bar across his shoulders,  
the rod of his oppressor,  
these you break as on the day of Midian.  
For all the footgear of battle,  
every cloak rolled in blood,  
is burnt  
and consumed by fire.  
For there is a child born for us,  
a son given to us  
and dominion is laid on his shoulders;  
and this is the name they give him:  
Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God,  
Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace.  
Wide is his dominion  
in a peace that has no end,  
for the throne of David  
and for his royal power,  
which he establishes and makes secure  
in justice and integrity.  
From this time onwards and for ever,  
the jealous love of the Lord of hosts  
will do this.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## Psalm *Ps 95:1-3. 11-13 R. Lk 2:11*

**(R.) Today is born our Saviour,  
Christ the Lord.**

1. O sing a new song to the Lord,  
sing to the Lord all the earth.  
O sing to the Lord, bless his name. (R.)
2. Proclaim his help day by day,  
tell among the nations his glory  
and his wonders among all  
the peoples. (R.)
3. Let the heavens rejoice and earth  
be glad,  
let the sea and all within it thunder praise,  
let the land and all it bears rejoice,  
all the trees of the wood shout for joy  
at the presence of the Lord  
for he comes,  
he comes to rule the earth. (R.)
4. With justice he will rule the world,  
he will judge the peoples with  
his truth (R.)

## Second Reading *Ti 2:11-14*

*A Reading from the Letter of St Paul to Timothy*

God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race and taught us that what we have to do is to give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our worldly ambitions; we must be self-restrained and live good and religious lives here in this present world, while we are waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the Appearing of the glory of our great God and saviour Christ Jesus. He sacrificed himself for us in order to set us free from all wickedness and to purify a people so that it could be his very own and would have no ambition except to do good.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## Gospel Acclamation *Lk 2:10-11*

**Alleluia, alleluia!**

**Good News and great joy to all  
the world:**

**today is born our Saviour, Christ  
the Lord. Alleluia!**

## Gospel *Lk 2:1-14*

The Lord be with you. **And with your Spirit.**  
A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to  
Luke. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census – the first – took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she 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. In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turns to watch their flocks during the night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified, but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a saviour has been born for you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing: 'Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace to all who enjoy his favour.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

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Reflection by *Greg Sunter*

If you were to give just a cursory glance at a collection of 'religious' Christmas cards, or even the local nativity scene, you would undoubtedly see a varied assortment of shepherds, wise men, livestock and angels gathered around the holy family in a timber structure of some sort. Even the most casual reading of Luke's account of the birth of Christ would reveal that most of the nativity figurines are missing! Our retelling of the birth of Christ tends to be an amalgamation of the Luke and Matthew versions with a bit of creative tradition thrown in for good measure.

The Luke account of the nativity carries a very specific theology that runs throughout the rest of that gospel. It is a theology that places the outcast and downtrodden at the centre of Jesus' mission. In this account, Jesus is born outside the town because there is no room for Joseph and Mary within the safety of the inn. Like those he will minister to later in life, Jesus is born 'on the edge' – even outside the boundaries. Rather than the impressive 'Wise Men' of the Matthew infancy account, the witnesses to Jesus' birth in the Luke account are lowly shepherds. Unlike the somewhat romantic notion we may have of shepherds, in Jesus' time they were regarded as little better than thieves and cut-throats. All they could be trusted to do was tend sheep outside of townships and away from 'civilised' society. They held one of the lowest positions in Jewish society. The gospel writer's choice of these witnesses to the birth of Jesus is a very deliberate one that clearly announces the purpose and direction of Jesus' mission.



# Wordsearch

Try to find these words:



- angels
- happy
- Joseph
- peace
- Christ
- inn
- manger
- sheep
- engaged
- Jesus
- Nazareth
- travelled

Q S N Q W F T H I I Q V I H X D L  
 R O P N Q I P Q A P L U D A Z J D  
 M I F U I M R Q X M B F E I V U E  
 N R C C S N S K Q M C Z G Z R O L  
 B Q R O K C A T U X X Z A E L E L  
 R H Y N K B Q Z H P A E G O O C E  
 I W A N L V M V A A Q N N A D A V  
 C V A P L V A D S R A B E S Q E A  
 S B K R P F G R Y M E G O U C P R  
 D D E N Z Y I S O P P T N S H C T  
 Z J S A Z Q S L E G N A H E D Y G  
 N O D M M F C T S I R H C J I S O  
 P S S H E E P K U J V S P M X N T  
 L E W C U E O I T V Z L Q C H L I  
 T P Z P W Q T Q X U D E M T U V L  
 H H C B W A R V F G H V S W J Y Q

**S**t Stephen was the first deacon chosen by the apostles soon after the death and resurrection of Jesus. He took care of the needs of Greek-speaking widows among the Christian community in Jerusalem, and he was also known as a zealous preacher. But his preaching was considered blasphemy by the Jewish council, and he was stoned to death in c.35 AD. Stephen became the first martyr for Christ and even as they threw stones at him, he asked God to forgive his attackers for their sins.

Join up the angels and see what they spell

