



The Eucharist of Christmas Day 2024

The celebration of Christ's incarnation at Christmas is one of the two poles of the Christian year. (the other is Easter). 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: we are recalled, amid all the joyful customs and celebrations of Christmas, to this 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, notably developed from the end of the nineteenth century. The Christmas season is often celebrated for twelve days, ending with the Epiphany.

We gather in worship

*Please join in all parts of the service printed in **bold** type. Please stand where indicated only if you wish. Collection plates are at the back of church if you would like to donate before the service begins.*

Before we start, the Priest will welcome everyone and invite us to join in prayer as we prepare ourselves for worship.

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

After praying, please remain quiet until the bell rings and we stand to sing.

O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant
O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem
come and behold him
born the King of Angels.
O come, let us adore him, (×3)
Christ the Lord.

God of God, Light of Light;
lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb;
very God,
begotten not created; *Refrain*

Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God
in the highest: *Refrain*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace, mercy and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
and also with you.

We light this candle for the newborn Christ,
reawakening hope and faith – the Word embodied for our time.
God, as we receive your promise, you are light, you are hope.

A child carries the candle to the advent wreath as we sing,

**Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning:
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing; *Refrain***

Translated from the Latin (18th century) by Frederick Oakely (1802-1880)

Hear the words of the angel to Joseph: 'You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' Therefore let us seek the forgiveness of God through Jesus the Saviour of the world.

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

Lord, have mercy. **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. **Christ, have mercy.**

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

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

The God of all healing and forgiveness draw you to himself,
that you may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh,
and be cleansed from all your sins through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Gloria

♪ **Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God in the highest!**
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.
Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God in the highest!
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.
Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God in the highest!
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.
Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God in the highest!

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

Silence is kept.

Lord Jesus Christ, your birth at Bethlehem
draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth:
accept our heartfelt praise
as we worship you, our Saviour and our eternal God. **Amen.**

We listen for God's Word
Isaiah 9.2-7

We sit

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness –
on them light has shined.

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 all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

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 onwards and for evermore.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The cantor sings verses from **Psalm 96**. We all join in the refrain:



♪ **Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.**

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all you lands.
Sing to the Lord; bless his name.

♪ **Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.**

Announce his salvation, day after day. Tell his glory among the nations;
among all peoples, his wondrous deeds.

♪ **Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.**

Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice; let the sea and what fills it
resound; let the plains be joyful and all that is in them! Then shall all the
trees of the forest exult.

♪ **Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.**

They shall exult before the Lord, for he comes; for he comes to rule the earth.
He shall rule the world with justice and the peoples with his constancy.

♪ **Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.**

The Gospel: Luke 2.1-20

We stand facing the gospel

♪ Alleluia... **Alleluia...**

I bring you news of great joy, Joy for all nations,
for today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.

♪ **Alleluia...**

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.
Glory to you, O Lord.

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. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

*We sit for the **Sermon.***

The Creed

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.

The Prayers of Intercession

We sit or kneel

Response Jesus, Saviour,
Hear our prayer.

And at the end,
Lord Jesus Christ, child of Mary,
you know us and love us,
you share our lives
and hear our prayer.
Glory to you for ever. Amen.

The Peace

We stand

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,
and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.

The deacon says,
Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

*Please offer one another a sign of peace with a handshake, warm smile,
nod, or bow, and with the words, 'Peace be with you.'*

The Offering

*A collection is taken for the work of the Church. The plate and card reader
will be available for cash and card donations. Please indicate if you wish to
make an offering.*

1. **Unto us is born a Son,
King of quires supernal:
see on earth his life begun,
of lords the Lord eternal,
of lords the Lord eternal,**
2. **Christ, from heav'n descending low,
comes on earth a stranger;
ox and ass their owner know,
becradled in a manger,
becradled in a manger.**
3. **This did Herod sore affray,
and grievously bewilder,
so he gave the word to slay,
and slew the little childer,
and slew the little childer.**
4. **Of his love and mercy mild
this the Christmas story;
and O that Mary's gentle Child
might lead us up to glory,
might lead us up to glory!**
5. **O and A and A and O,
cum cantibus in choro,
let our merry organ go,
benedicamus Domino,
benedicamus Domino.**

George Woodward (1848-1934)

We celebrate and receive Jesus in Bread and Wine

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

Eucharistic Prayer.

*Please remain standing
if it is comfortable for you.*

The Lord is here. **God's Spirit is with us.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give thanks and praise.

*We hear how Jesus' birth was foretold,
and we are filled with joy, wonder and praise.*

♪ **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.
Blessèd is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.**

*The priest takes the bread and wine and blesses them.
We say this prayer to acclaim Jesus present among us:*

Christ is the bread of life:
**When we eat this bread and drink this cup,
We proclaim your death,
Lord Jesus, until you come in glory.**

*We ask God to help us to work for justice and mercy,
and to gather us at the last into his arms.*

... O loving Father, for ever and ever.

♪ **Amen, amen, amen.**

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 forever. Amen.

We break the bread of life, and that life is the light of the world.
**God here among us, light in the midst of us,
bring us light and life.**

- ♪ Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.
- ♪ Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.
- ♪ Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.

*Christ is the true bread which has come down from heaven:
Lord, give us this bread always.*

We share in Communion.

The people receive communion. Those who do not wish to receive are warmly invited to come forward for an individual blessing. Gluten free wafers are available. Communion will be brought to those seated in the south aisle. Otherwise, please come to the front and form a queue

During Communion we sing:

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down,
and glory shone around.

'Fear not,' said he (for mighty dread
had seized their troubled mind);
'glad tidings of great joy I bring
to you and all mankind.

'To you, in David's town, this day
is born of David's line
a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
and this shall be the sign:

'The heav'nly babe you there shall find
to human view displayed,
all meanly wrapped in swathing bands
and in a manger laid.'

Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
appeared a shining throng
of angels praising God, who thus
addressed their joyful song:

'All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace;
goodwill henceforth from heav'n to men
begin and never cease.'

Nahum Tate (1652-1715)

Then the choir sings a Christmas Carol

We keep silence together.

God our Father, whose Word has come among us in the Holy Child of Bethlehem: may the light of faith illumine our hearts and shine in our words and deeds; through him who is Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

**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.**

Notices may be given.

We go into the world to share God's love.

Hark! The herald angels sing
'Glory to the new-born King;
peace on earth and mercy mild;
God and sinners reconciled.'
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with the angelic host proclaim,
'Christ is born in Bethlehem!'
Hark the herald angels sing,
'Glory to the new-born King.'

Christ by highest heaven adored,
Christ the everlasting Lord:
late in time, behold Him come,
offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
'Glory to the new-born King.'

Hail the heaven born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that man no more may die,
born to raise the sons of earth,
born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
'Glory to the new-born King.'

C. Wesley, T. Whitefield and others

The Blessing

The Lord be with you: **and also with you.**

We bow our heads and pray for God's blessing,

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

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

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

And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

The deacon says,

Go in peace. Proclaim the Word made flesh.
Glory, thanks and praise to God.

Organ voluntary

Please remain standing until the choir and ministers have left.

Our regular Sunday Services

8.00am Said Holy Communion

10.00am Parish Eucharist (Common Worship Order 1)

5.00pm Choral Evensong or Sung Evensong (see website)

You can find more about our services and our parish life at:

www.allsaintshighwycombe.org

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