



ALL SAINTS  
HIGH WYCOMBE



Midnight Mass

2023

## *Introduction to Christmas*

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, 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.

## *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:*

It came upon the midnight clear,  
that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth,  
to touch their harps of gold;  
"Peace on the earth, good will to men,  
from Heaven's all gracious King."  
The world in solemn stillness lay,  
to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come  
with peaceful wings unfurled,  
and still their heavenly music floats  
o'er all the weary world;  
above its sad and lowly plains,  
they bend on hovering wing,  
and ever o'er its Babel sounds  
the blessed angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife  
the world has suffered long;  
beneath the angel strain have rolled  
two thousand years of wrong;  
and man, at war with man, hears not  
the love-song which they bring;  
O hush the noise, ye men of strife  
and hear the angels sing!

For lo! the days are hastening on,  
by prophet-bards foretold,  
when with the ever-circling years  
comes round the age of gold;  
when peace shall over all the earth  
its ancient splendours fling,  
and the whole world give back the song  
which now the angels sing.

*Edmund H. Sears (1810-1876)*

*We turn to face the crib (at the font).*

*The ministers gather round the crib and the priest welcomes us,*

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

**And also with you.**

*The crib is blessed.*

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 glory.

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. **Amen.**

*The ministers process to the altar*

*and the priest censens it as a fanfare is played on the organ.*

***We ask for a new beginning.***

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 priest proclaims God's forgiveness.*

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.**

*We sing this song, which echoes the song the angels sang that first Christmas.*

♪ **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!**

*The priest invites us to pray:*

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.*

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.

**Amen.**

*We sit*

## *We listen for God's Word*

### *Isaiah 52.7-10*

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.

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*We stand to sing:*

O little town of Bethlehem,  
how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
the silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
the everlasting light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years  
are met in thee tonight.

O morning stars, together  
proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the King,  
and peace to men on earth;  
for Christ is born of Mary;  
and, gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep  
their watch of wond'ring love.

*Choir only* How silently, how silently,  
the wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
the blessings of his heaven.  
No ear may hear his coming;  
but in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive him, still  
the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem,  
descend to us, we pray:  
cast out our sin and enter in,  
be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
the great glad tidings tell:  
O come to us, abide with us,  
our Lord Emmanuel.

*Phillips Brooks (1835-1893)*

*We hear how Jesus was sent as the living Word of God.*

***The Gospel Reading: John 1.1-14***

♪ Alleluia...

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,  
and we have seen his glory.

♪ Alleluia...

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

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

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

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.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*We sit for the sermon, then we keep silence together.*

***We proclaim our faith in God.***

*We stand and proclaim our faith in the words of the Creed, a declaration agreed by Christians throughout the world and down the ages.*

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth, and 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.**



***We pray.***

*We sit or kneel for the prayers, which include these responses:*

Holy God,  
**Hear our prayer.**

*And at the end,*

...our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

***We share the peace of Christ.***

*We stand to share the peace of Christmas with one another.*

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

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.*

*We sing this hymn:*

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 th' angelic host proclaim,  
Christ is born in Bethlehem:  
*Hark! the herald angels sing  
Glory to the new-born king.*

Christ, by highest heav'n adored,  
Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
late in time behold him come  
offspring of a Virgin's womb!  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,  
hail th' 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.*

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

## ***We celebrate and receive Jesus in Bread and Wine***

*The priest takes the bread and wine and says,*

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

**Amen.**

*Please remain standing during the Eucharistic Prayer if it is comfortable for you.*

*The priest says the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving.*

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.*

*The priest praises God for his mighty acts, and we sing*

♪ **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. This is how Jesus told us to remember and receive him.*

*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.

*We sing:*

♪ **Amen. Amen. Amen.**

## *We share in Holy Communion.*

*We sit or kneel as we pray as Jesus taught,*

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.

*The priest breaks the holy bread to show that we all can share God's love.*

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.

*We sing:*

- ♪ 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.

## *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.*

*Please come to the front and form a queue. Communion will be administered in both kinds, on the hand and from the chalice (optional). Please do not intinct (dip) the wafer in the chalice.*

*The priest says:*

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

*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 heavenly 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;  
good will henceforth from heaven to men  
begin and never cease.'

*Nahum Tate (1652-1715)*

*Then the choir sings*  
*Sleep softly, little one by David W. Jepson*

*After communion.*

*The priest says a prayer of thanksgiving:*

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. Amen.

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

*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, O come, let us adore him,  
    O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

God of God, light of Light,  
lo! he abhors not the Virgin's womb;  
very God, begotten, not created:  
    O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
    O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

See how the Shepherds,  
summoned to his cradle,  
leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;  
we too will thither,  
bend our joyful footsteps:  
    O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
    O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Sing, choirs of Angels,  
sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;  
'Glory to God in the Highest.'  
    O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
    O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,  
born this happy morning,  
Jesu, to thee be glory given;  
Word of the Father,  
now in flesh appearing:  
    O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
    O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

*J. F. Wade (c.1711-1786)*

*The priest blesses us in the name of God.*

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

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.**

*Then the deacon says,*

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

*Please remain standing until the choir and ministers have left.*

*Organ Voluntary: Toccata sur "Il est né, le divin Enfant" - Denis Bédard*

## *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 on our website at:*

*[www.allsaintshighwycombe.org](http://www.allsaintshighwycombe.org)*

*[www.facebook.com/AllSaintsHW](http://www.facebook.com/AllSaintsHW)*

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