



## The First Sunday of Christmas 28<sup>TH</sup> December 2025

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

### HYMN

Christians, awake, salute the happy morn  
whereon the saviour of mankind was born.  
Rise to adore the mystery of love,  
which hosts of angels chanted from above;  
with them the joyful tidings first begun  
of God incarnate and the virgin's son.

Then to the watchful shepherds it was told,  
who heard the angelic herald's voice: "behold,  
I bring good tidings of a saviour's birth  
to you and all the nations upon earth;  
this day hath God fulfilled his promised word,  
this day is born a saviour, Christ the lord."

He spake; and straightway the celestial choir  
in hymns of joy, unknown before, conspire;  
the praises of redeeming love they sang,  
and heaven's whole orb with hallelujahs rang;  
God's highest glory was their anthem still,  
peace upon earth, and unto men good-will.

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.

Jesus our Saviour,  
you were born in poverty and laid in a manger:  
forgive our greed and rejection of your ways.  
Christ, have mercy.

To Bethlehem straight the enlightened shepherds  
ran,  
to see the wonders God had wrought for man:  
then to their flocks, still praising God, return,  
and their glad hearts with holy rapture burn;  
amazed, the wondrous tidings they proclaim,  
the first apostles of his infant fame.

O! May we keep and ponder in our mind  
God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind;  
trace we the babe, who hath retrieved our loss,  
from the poor manger to the bitter cross;  
tread in his steps, assisted by his grace,  
till man's first heavenly state again takes place.

Then may we hope, the angelic hosts among,  
to join, redeemed, a glad triumphant throng;  
he that was born upon this joyful day  
around us all his glory shall display;  
saved by his love, incessant we shall sing  
eternal praise to heaven's almighty king.

Introduction to confession

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

Absolution

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

Collect of First Sunday of Christmas

Almighty God,  
who wonderfully created us in your own image  
and yet more wonderfully restored us  
through your Son Jesus Christ:  
grant that, as he came to share in our humanity,  
so we may share the life of his divinity;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen

Scripture reading  
Jeremiah 31:15 to 17

<sup>15</sup> This is what the LORD says:

‘A voice is heard in Ramah,  
mourning and great weeping,  
Rachel weeping for her children  
and refusing to be comforted,  
because they are no more.’

<sup>16</sup> This is what the LORD says:

‘Restrain your voice from weeping  
and your eyes from tears,  
for your work will be rewarded,’  
declares the LORD.  
‘They will return from the land of the enemy.

<sup>17</sup> So there is hope for your descendants,’  
declares the LORD.

‘Your children will return to their own land.

Psalms 124

- 1 If the Lord himself had not been on our side,  
now may Israel say;
- 2 If the Lord had not been on our side,  
when enemies rose up against us;
- 3 Then would they have swallowed us alive  
when their anger burned against us;
- 4 Then would the waters have overwhelmed us  
and the torrent gone over our soul;

over our soul would have swept the raging waters.

- 5 But blessed be the Lord  
who has not given us over to be a prey for their teeth.



6 Our soul has escaped  
as a bird from the snare of the fowler;  
the snare is broken and we are delivered.

7 Our help is in the name of the Lord,  
who has made heaven and earth.  
*O God, maker of heaven and earth,  
you save us in the water of baptism  
and by the suffering of your Son you set us free;  
help us to put our trust in his victory  
and to know the salvation won for us  
by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Scripture reading  
1 Corinthians 1. 26 -29

<sup>26</sup> Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. <sup>28</sup> God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no one may boast before him.

This is the word of the Lord  
Thanks be to God

#### HYMN

Come, Thou Redeemer of the earth,  
And manifest Thy virgin birth:  
Let every age adoring fall;  
Such birth befits the God of all.

Begotten of no human will,  
But of the Spirit, Thou art still  
The Word of God in flesh arrayed,  
The promised Fruit to man displayed.

The virgin womb that burden gained  
With virgin honour all unstained;  
The banners there of virtue glow;  
God in His temple dwells below.

Thy cradle here shall glitter bright,  
And darkness breathe a newer light,  
Where endless faith shall shine serene,  
And twilight never intervene.

Forth from His chamber goeth He,  
That royal home of purity,  
A giant in twofold substance one,  
Rejoicing now His course to run.

From God the Father He proceeds,  
To God the Father back He speeds;  
His course He runs to death and hell,  
Returning on God's throne to dwell.

O equal to the Father, Thou!  
Gird on Thy fleshly mantle now;  
The weakness of our mortal state  
With deathless might invigorate.

All laud to God the Father be,  
All praise, eternal Son, to Thee;  
All glory, as is ever meet,  
To God the Holy Paraclete  
(St Ambrose 340 - 397 and others)

The Gospel

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

Alleluia

The Holy Gospel is written in the 2nd chapter of the Gospel of Matthew beginning at the 13th verse.

<sup>13</sup> When they (the Magi) had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. 'Get up,' he said, 'take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.'

<sup>14</sup> So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, <sup>15</sup> where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'

<sup>16</sup> When Herod realised that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. <sup>17</sup> Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

<sup>18</sup> 'A voice is heard in Ramah,  
weeping and great mourning,  
Rachel weeping for her children  
and refusing to be comforted,  
because they are no more.'

Praise to thee, O Christ

Reflection

If you are like me, the stories in the three synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, can get a bit jumbled up. We have heard them so often that the accounts tend to meld together rather than hold their distinctive emphasis. They are referred to as 'synoptic' because they 'see together' in giving their account of Jesus's life. There are in each of them additions and omissions; but broadly speaking their material is the same and the arrangement the same order.

Over the coming months our gospel readings will come from Matthew's account. So as a challenge to myself I am reading Matthew's gospel as if for the first time – noting just what is there and not what I think is there.

What becomes immediately apparent is that what we take to be the 'Christmas story' so loved by nativity plays is a constructed compilation from Matthew and mostly from Luke. Mark is quiet on the matter – Jesus just seems to bound onto the scene.

In Matthew, it is Joseph who is the significant mover receiving insight and directions from angels three times; protecting Mary from shame and the infant Jesus from those who would destroy him. The magi are the only visitors and Matthew records the terrible actions of Herod ordering the killing of all the young boys in and around Bethlehem.

It is a far cry from the often sentimentalised and sanitised Christmas story. Jesus is born into the harsh reality of a world of fear and violence- - our world. The one who is the light of the world is no stranger to the darkest places in our world today.

Joseph is told that their child is begotten by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the creator of the world and the giver of life. So, then, in Jesus there entered the world the very life and power of God. That power, which breathed life into that in which there was no life, is come to breathe life into our sorrows, weaknesses and frustrations.

Jesus came to this world, not for His own sake, but for us and for our salvation. We could put it this way

– we are not really alive until Jesus enters into our lives.

Even our very ordinary lives. Paul's description of the church at Corinth makes this point; not many were of any worth in the 'eyes' of the world. But here again is the upside-down nature of the people of God. Most of us do not account for very much. Paul suggest this perhaps makes more room for God for such people have less to maintain and less to fall from

I have known two people in my life whom the world would barely notice and when they did it was with some derision or pity. Yet the marks of their Christian expression have remained powerfully with me, more so than the shining lights of the 'Christian stage' of that time. It wasn't what they said or did, but who they were. There was an childlike innocence about them, not the innocence of ignorance but an innocence that shamed me. There was a natural humility, alongside an often piercing wisdom, no pretence, seeing the good in others and a thankfulness for life.

It was easy to overlook that there is a choice of God involved – this should cause us to ponder. *God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.* ‘

The Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth;  
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried.  
He descended into hell.  
The third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.  
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Ghost,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Intercessions

Let us pray to our incarnate Lord,  
who has brought us out of darkness  
and into his own marvellous light.

Christ born for us,  
Son of God given for us:  
help us to know you,  
to worship and to serve you.  
Wonderful counsellor,  
you order all things with your wisdom:  
help the Church to reveal the mystery of your love  
and fill her with the Spirit of truth.  
Mighty God,  
the government is on your shoulders:  
guide the leaders of the nations  
and bring in your kingdom of justice and righteousness.

Prince of peace,  
you bring reconciliation through the cross:  
by your healing power give to all who suffer  
your gift of wholeness and peace.  
We hold before you:  
those homeless through natural disaster and war  
children harmed by those who should care for them.  
our brothers and sisters in the faith,  
persecuted because they bear the name of Jesus  
those known to us in need at this time.  
and we commit those who have died into your encompassing love

Lord of life, Jesus Christ,  
Son of the Father,  
full of the Spirit,  
hear our prayer,  
receive our praises,  
fill our lives.  
Amen.

As our O Lord Jesus taught us, so we pray:

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.

May the joy of the angels,  
the eagerness of the shepherds,  
the perseverance of the wise men,  
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,  
and the peace of the Christ-child  
be yours this Christmas;  
and the blessing of God,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you  
and remain with you always  
Amen.

#### HYMN

Unto us a boy is born!  
The King of all creation,  
Came he to a world forlorn,  
The Lord of every nation.

Herod then with fear was filled:  
"A prince," he said, "in Jewry!"  
And all the little boys he killed  
At Bethlehem in his fury.

Cradled in a stall was he  
With sleepy cows and asses;  
But the very beasts could see  
That he the world surpasses.

Now may Mary's son, who came  
So long ago to love us,  
Lead us all with hearts aflame  
Unto the joys above us.

5 Alpha and Omega he!  
Now let the organ thunder,  
While the choir with peals of glee  
Shall rend the air asunder.

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