

A Service of Holy Communion for
Christmas

The Nativity of Jesus Christ



All Saints Church, Birkenhead

A CHRISTMAS REFLECTION

The celebration of Christmas is one of the two poles of the Christian year, the other being 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 celebration:

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, and neither of the great Christmas morning readings (Hebrews 1 and John 1) is taken from the infancy narratives. The task of the Christmas service is to recall us, amid all the joyful customs and celebrations of Christmas, to this central truth of the Word made flesh (incarnation), God with us.

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.

May you know something of the wonder and joy of the Christ child this Christmas.

PROCESSION AND BLESSING OF THE CRIB AT MIDNIGHT

Let us proceed in peace
In the Name of Christ. Amen

An opening hymn is sung

The word was made flesh and dwelt among us
And we beheld his glory

Let us pray as we receive the Christ child in our midst.

THE GATHERING OF THE COMMUNITY

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

God's love was revealed among us so that we might live through Jesus.

Silence is kept

Jesus, you are the image of the invisible God,
the first-born of all creation:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Jesus, you are God's true child, born of Mary:
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

Jesus, you are Word made flesh, full of grace and truth:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Radiant God,
you send your light
into dark and shackled lives;
shine in our hearts ✝
and set us free to praise you,
now and for ever. **Amen.**

*The **Christ Candle** is lit while the hand held
Candles are extinguished at
The Midnight Service*

The peace of Christ rule in our hearts
The word of Christ dwell in us richly.

Let us pray in the peace of this Christmas celebration
that our joy in the birth of Christ will be complete.

Silence is kept

We pray the Collect together

God, you have made this most holy time
radiant with the splendour of the true light,
may we, who even now obscurely share the mystery of your light,
come to enjoy your light in fullness,
who is alive with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

THE READINGS

After each reading the response is

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church
Thanks be to God

A Hymn is sung

We remain standing for the Gospel reading

The reader leads us in the Gospel acclamation:

Today Christ is born:
alleluia.

Today the Saviour has come:
alleluia.

Today the angels sing on earth:
alleluia. Glory to God in the highest.

The Holy Gospel according to...
✠ Praise and Glory to God

After the Gospel, the reader says

This is the Gospel of Christ.
Praise to Christ the Word

THE SERMON

Following The Sermon we keep silence.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

In peace let us pray to God.

Prayers and intercessions are offered on our behalf for the church, the world and our community.

THE PEACE

We stand together

At midnight

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

At morning

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 Christ be always with you.
And also with you.

THE PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS

*We sing a **Hymn** as the table is set*

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

THE GREAT 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 offer thanks and praise

It is right indeed that we should praise you,
God of love, our source and our fulfilment,
for you create all things,
and in you we live and move
and have our being.
Your wonder is manifest
in land and sea and sky.

When the times had at last grown full
and the earth had ripened in abundance,
you made us in your image for yourself.

And even though we turn from you,
again and again you call us to yourself,
and in every age, promise liberation.

As a mother tenderly gathers her children,
you embraced a people as your own
to rear them in your way of compassionate love.
From your own being you sent Jesus among us,
incarnate of the Holy Spirit
and born of Mary our sister.

Jesus revealed your care for all you have made,
and showed us your way of reconciliation.
Looking forward to the joy of new life
Jesus suffered the pangs of the cross
and in rising again
became the first-born
of the renewed family.

You sent your Holy Spirit
and gave birth to us your church.
Your Spirit stays to nurture and to guide us.

Now we join hands around your table,
and with all creation
we hymn your praise for your unending love,
as we say:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

To you indeed be glory, almighty God,
because on the night before he died,
your Son, Jesus Christ, took bread;
when he had given you thanks,
he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said:
Take, eat, this is my body
which is given for you;
do this to remember me.

After supper he took the cup;
when he had given you thanks,
he gave it to them and said:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood
poured out for you;
do this as often as you drink it
to remember me.

And so in this great sacrament
we celebrate and proclaim
the mystery of our faith:

Christ has died,
Christ is risen,
Christ will come in glory.

Therefore, loving God,
recalling now Christ's death and resurrection,
we ask you to accept
this our sacrifice of praise.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us
and our celebration,
that we may be fed with the body and blood of your Son
and be filled with your life and goodness.
Strengthen us to do your work,
and to be your body in the world.

Unite us in Christ
and give us your peace.
Through your Holy Spirit,
burning as a flame, gentle as a dove,
may we who receive these gifts
live lives of justice, love, and prayer,
and be a voice for those who are not heard.
In union with your whole church
we worship you, O God,
in songs of everlasting praise.

✠ **B**lessing, honour and glory be yours,
here and everywhere,
now and for ever. Amen.

Rejoicing in the presence of God here among us,
as our Saviour 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.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen

Kua akona nei tatou e to tatou Ariki,
ka inoi tatou
E to matou Matua i te rangi
Kia tapu tou Ingoa.
Kia tae mai tou rangatiratanga.
Kia meatia tau e pai ai
ki runga ki te whenua,
kia rite ano ki to te rangi.
Homai ki a matou aiane
he taro ma matou mo tenei ra.
Murua o matou hara,
Me matou hoki e muru nei
i o te hunga e hara ana ki a matou.
Aua hoki matou e kawea kia whakawaia;
Engari whakaorangia matou i te kino:
Nou hoki te rangatiratanga, te kaha,
me te kororia,
Ake ake ake. Amine.

Silence is kept

The bread is broken

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 to light and life.**

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

The presiding priest and the people receive communion.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

At midnight

Loving God,
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.

At morning

Loving God,
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.

A Final Hymn is sung

A Blessing is given...

May God,
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... ✠
Amen.

We are sent out with these words

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