



THE LORD'S DAY

Christmas Mass (All Years)

The Watermead Apostolate offers this weekly newsletter as a helpful guide and background to the readings used at our Catholic Mass each Sunday. Watermead began in 1992 as a voice for people who wish to share understanding of living their faith through their various God-given gifts and talents. We frame these gifts by publishing them as books, cards and resources - and we record and publish the music. We also arrange retreats and pilgrimages.

For information about the work of our apostolate, to download our resources or to offer newsletter contributions, do feel welcome to contact us at:

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MIDNIGHT MASS

First Reading

Isaiah 9 : 2-7

Chapter 8 has told of the desperation of the people, turning against God and king (especially verses 21 ff.), but in chapter 9 there is new hope. Galilee was conquered in 732 BC (the tribes of Zebulan and Naphtali dwelt in Galilee) but is given new hope by the promise of a child who will become king under God's protection. The suffering of Galilee becomes a prophecy and image of the later suffering and conquest of Israel (721 BC) and Jerusalem (587 BC), and the wonderful reassurance of today's reading becomes a promise for the whole nation and people.

Second Reading

Titus 2 : 11-14

Titus was a co-worker with Paul and a strong influence in bringing about reconciliation with the Church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 7:6-14). Now he is bishop in Crete and this letter, written by one of Paul's disciples (writing under Paul's name), indicates the honoured position Titus held in the Christian Church. Today's reading rejoices that God has revealed divine love in the person of Jesus, inviting the world to become the people of God.

Gospel Reading

Luke 2 : 1-14

Augustus Caesar was emperor 27 BC - 14 AD. There is nothing in Roman history to indicate that a universal census was taken during his reign, so the details of Luke's account of a necessary journey to Bethlehem are puzzling. Respect for Joseph makes us believe that he would not have imposed on Mary an unnecessary and difficult five-day journey. They would have travelled in good time. That Joseph's family in Bethlehem would have rejected a young girl about to give birth to her first child seems impossible. The story is not history - it is Gospel, full of symbolism (e.g. the shepherds symbolise the great shepherd leaders of the Old Testament: Abraham, Moses, David, rejoicing for their people).

This week I shall . . .
make happy Christmas for others

There are three celebrations of mass on

Christmas Day. The tradition began in the Holy Land with **Midnight Mass** at Bethlehem, **Dawn** at Jerusalem and **Day** at Bethlehem. **Rome** continues that tradition with **Midnight Mass** at St. Peter's, **Dawn** at St. Anastasia's and **Day** at St. Mary Major's.

Parishes may celebrate mass three times

DAWN MASS

First Reading

Isaiah 62 : 11-12

We are in the final part of the Book of Isaiah, chapters of joy and universal salvation. The Zion hill in Jerusalem, on which the Temple was built, becomes the centre of the world and all peoples are invited to come there to the Lord. Jesus, our Saviour, leads us and we become the Holy People, the Lord's redeemed.

Second Reading

Titus 3 : 4-7

We are near the end of the letter. "Paul" has been practical in advice to Titus - making careful appointments, guarding the people against false teachers, pointing out the essential ideals by which a Christian community should live, and then comes today's reading about the kindness of God - revealed through the birth of Jesus, our Saviour, and confirmed by the gifts of the Spirit poured out on us. With joy we look forward to eternal life.

Gospel Reading

Luke 2 : 15-20

The shepherds, symbolising the great leaders of the Old Testament, hurry to Bethlehem. They "tell everyone" what they had been told in the angels' message - which indicates a large crowd present with Mary, Joseph and the baby. It is what we would expect - family joy and support at the birth of a first child. The people listen with astonishment, but Mary listens with wonder and treasures what she hears. The picture is idyllic, the pain and loneliness of the midnight mass Gospel story now gone. But it is the suffering servant (of the Book of Isaiah) who has been born and Mary's heart, full of wonder, will later be pierced.

DAY MASS

First Reading

Isaiah 52 : 7-10

Chapter 51 has foretold the salvation of Israel - a conquered people will be set free. The Lord seems to have been in a deep slumber, unaware of the suffering of the people, but awakes in order to console them. Jerusalem must awaken to the dawn of a new promise and prepare for the coming of a saviour. In today's reading he comes, bringing good news, peace and happiness. The world is saved (v.10) and shares the joy of a redeemed Jerusalem.

Second Reading

Hebrews 1 : 1-6

We do not know the author of this letter but we know him to have been a Greek scholar who wrote in a beautiful style. He wrote for Hebrew Christians, longing to show them that Jesus was everything the Scriptures had foretold - the Messiah, a Saviour, King of an eternal kingdom. The prophets foresaw only dimly, but now Christians acknowledge the Messiah as Son of God, the Word of Creation, begotten of the Divine Father, First born Son. The wonder and awe are palpable.

Gospel Reading

John 1 : 1-18

John's Gospel was written in the early part of the second century, put together by his disciples. It reflects John's love for Christ and Christ's love for John ("the disciple Jesus loved"). John was Jesus' cousin, and to read today's prologue to the Gospel is to catch the wonder in John that the Jesus he had known from boyhood was truly the Son of God. The ordinariness of Jesus' life is in contrast to the divine revelation he has brought with him, and his casual rejection by the people is because they are not interested in anything outside their everyday concerns. Reverence for John the Baptist (v.15) is evident - and we remember that John was a follower of John the Baptist (John 1:35-59).

CHRISTMAS MASS

MIDNIGHT "Joy to the World";

DAWN "Peoples of God";

DAY "God with us".