

CHRISTMAS VIGIL MASS

Is 62:1–5; Acts 13:16–25; Mt 1:1–25

“When Light Gathers Us in Peace”

INTRODUCTION – “The Night the Guns Fell Silent”

My dear brothers and sisters,
welcome to this Christmas Vigil, a night when God’s light
gathers us in peace.

A few years ago, a small coastal town was hit by a terrible storm on Christmas Eve. Winds howled, waves crashed, and homes were flooded. Families huddled in darkness, uncertain and afraid. Yet in the middle of the night, a local church lit its candles, placing them in every window it could reach. One by one, neighbours came outside, holding their own candles. Soon, the street was bathed in warm light, and strangers embraced, shared food, and sang carols together.

In that moment, amidst fear and uncertainty, the people realized something profound: the light of Christmas can shine in any darkness, drawing hearts together in hope,

peace, and love.

Tonight, we, too, gather from many paths and experiences. May this celebration open our hearts to the peace Christ brings and to the unity His birth proclaims.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Brothers and sisters, before we welcome the Light of the world, let us recognize the shadows that still dwell within and around us. Let us ask for the mercy that makes hearts new.

Lord Jesus, you came as light for those who dwell in darkness: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you were born to reconcile us with one another and with God: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you still gather the scattered and heal the broken: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May the God of light and mercy shine into our hearts, forgive our sins, and lead us out of darkness into the peace

of His Son, born in Bethlehem, and bring us one day to everlasting. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE GLORIA

Let us join the angels who sang that night over Bethlehem — not with fear, but with joy; not in division, but in one voice: **Glory to God in the highest!**

COLLECT

O God of endless dawn,
on this holy night You sent Your eternal Word to dwell
among us.
Gather Your scattered children into one household of
peace; melt what is frozen in our hearts;
and let the radiance of Christ's birth illumine every shadow
of our lives.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son...

Amen.

HOMILY: “When Light Gathers Us in Peace”

The Night the Guns Fell Silent

On Christmas Eve in 1914, amid the horror of World War I, soldiers huddled in the freezing trenches of northern France. Then, across the darkness, a single voice began to sing: “*Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht...*”—Silent Night, Holy Night.

One by one, others joined. Enemies laid down their rifles, climbed out of their trenches, and met halfway. They shook hands, shared food, exchanged small gifts, even played soccer. A young British officer wrote home, “It was the most wonderful sight—men who had been shooting at each other came together in friendship and peace.”

For a brief moment, the world glimpsed what Christmas means: **God’s light breaking through our darkness**, gathering enemies into a single family, and reminding us that we all belong to one humanity embraced by God.

1. God Gathers His People

Tonight, we too have gathered — perhaps not from trenches, but from busy lives, scattered hearts, and sometimes weary souls. The Vigil of Christmas draws us together just as it has drawn believers for centuries. The first reading from Isaiah sings of a desolate land that God will marry and make fruitful again: “You shall be called My Delight.” It is a love story — God refuses to abandon His people.

In the second reading, St. Paul recounts how God has guided Israel step by step until the promise of a Savior was fulfilled. Paul’s message is clear: **history is not a chain of accidents, but a story of mercy.**

And the Gospel gives that story a face — the child born of Mary and Joseph, Emmanuel, “God with us.” The long genealogy reminds us that **God works patiently through generations**, through saints and sinners alike, to bring about salvation. Even through broken people, God weaves a tapestry of grace.

And so we gather tonight not because we are perfect, but because **God has chosen to gather us anyway** — into

His family, into His peace.

2. Christmas Calls Us to Reconciliation

That night in 1914 was more than sentimentality — it was a sign of what happens when Christ enters human hearts. Christmas bridges divides. It calls enemies to see each other again as brothers.

Our world today is not at war in trenches, but many hearts are walled in by resentment, jealousy, and fear. Families are divided, neighbours alienated, faith grown cold. But every Christmas, God whispers: “Do not be afraid. A Savior has been born for you.”

If God could turn battlefields into places of peace, can He not also heal the cold wars in our homes and hearts? Christmas is not just about remembering an event; it is about **allowing Christ to be born anew** — in our relationships, in our forgiveness, in our compassion. Like Joseph in tonight’s Gospel, we are called to obey God’s voice even when we don’t understand everything, to choose mercy over pride, gentleness over judgment, love over law. Joseph’s quiet “yes” allowed the Savior to enter

the world; our small “yes” can let Him enter again today.

3. The Light That Shines in the Darkness

When we step out into the night after this Mass, we will see lights — on trees, on homes, in the streets. But the truest light is not from bulbs or candles; it is the light of the Child of Bethlehem.

As St. John says, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” The light of Christ does not eliminate the darkness, but it **shines within it**, transforming it.

In that manger, God becomes vulnerable — small enough to be held, weak enough to be loved. That is how God chose to enter our world — not as thunder, but as tenderness; not as a king with armies, but as a child with open arms.

This is grace — pure, unearned, overflowing love. We cannot buy it or earn it. We can only receive it, like the shepherds who simply came and knelt.

And once we have received this light, we must share it. Every candle is made to be lit. Every heart touched by

Christ is meant to become His lantern in the world.

The Candle in the Window

There is an Irish custom of placing a candle in the window on Christmas Eve. It is a sign of welcome — a message to every traveller that there is room here, that this home is open.

Maybe tonight, God’s light is that candle — burning in the window of heaven, inviting each of us home.

If Christmas means anything, it means this: **no matter how dark the night, no one is forgotten, no heart is beyond healing, no home beyond hope.**

So let us leave this place as bearers of that light, reconcilers in our families, and witnesses to peace in our world. For tonight, once more, the Word is made flesh and dwells among us.

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”

May that light shine through us, until every night becomes Christmas again.

INVITATION TO THE CREED

Together with Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and angels, let us profess our faith in the God who became one of us.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Brothers and sister, as the shepherds brought their gifts of faith and wonder, let us now bring the bread and wine of our thanksgiving. What we place on this altar is a sign of our lives — that Christ may gather them, bless them, and make them new. Pray that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God the Father almighty.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Lord of heaven and earth, accept these gifts born of Your generosity and our gratitude. As this bread becomes the Body of Christ and this wine His Blood of peace,

may we become one family in Your love, through the same Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PREFACE – “The Night of Gathering Light”

It is truly right and just, our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give You thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

On this holy night, the ancient promise was fulfilled: the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Your Word became flesh and dwelt among us, so that no human heart would ever be abandoned again.

In the Child of Bethlehem, You gather heaven and earth, divinity and dust, the mighty and the lowly. Through Him, peace is born — peace that the world cannot give.

And so, with angels and archangels,
with the shepherds and saints,
we lift our hearts in joyful praise,
as we sing the hymn of Your glory:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...

EUCARISTIC PRAYER III - “When Light Gathers Us in Peace”

You are indeed Holy, O Lord,
and all You have created
rightly gives You praise,
for through Your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,
by the power and working of the Holy Spirit,
You give life to all things and make them holy,
and You never cease to gather a people to Yourself,
so that from the rising of the sun to its setting
a pure sacrifice may be offered to Your name.

On this holy night, O Lord, when Your light gathers us in peace,

we remember that You draw together the scattered hearts of the world — from distant places, from broken homes, from silent fears — into one family of grace.

*As You once gathered shepherds around a manger and strangers around a star,
gather now Your Church around this altar,
that in this holy sacrifice we may become one in faith,
one in love, and one in peace through Christ, Your Son.*

**Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore You:
by the same Spirit graciously make holy these gifts
we have brought to You for consecration,
that they may become
the Body and Blood of Your Son our Lord Jesus
Christ,
at whose command we celebrate these mysteries.**

For on the night He was betrayed,
He Himself took bread,
and, giving You thanks, He said the blessing,
broke the bread and gave it to His disciples, saying:

**Take this, all of you, and eat of it,
for this is My Body,
which will be given up for you.**

In a similar way, when supper was ended,
He took the chalice,
and, giving You thanks, He said the blessing,
and gave the chalice to His disciples, saying:

**Take this, all of you, and drink from it,
for this is the chalice of My Blood,
the Blood of the new and eternal covenant,
which will be poured out for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.**

Do this in memory of Me.

The mystery of faith.

Therefore, O Lord, as we celebrate
the memorial of the saving Passion of Your Son,
His wondrous Resurrection and Ascension into heaven,

and as we look forward to His second coming,
we offer You in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice.

*As we remember, O Father, the night when heaven
touched earth,
let the light of Bethlehem now shine within us.
The Child once laid in a manger comes now upon this
altar, and His peace gathers every heart that longs for
mercy. May this Eucharist be our Christmas —
where enmity is ended, where forgiveness is born,
and where we, reconciled by His love,
become a people of peace to our families and to the world.*

Look, we pray, upon the oblation of Your Church
and, recognizing the sacrificial Victim
by whose death You willed to reconcile us to Yourself,
grant that we, who are nourished
by the Body and Blood of Your Son
and filled with His Holy Spirit,
may become one body, one spirit in Christ.

May He make of us an eternal offering to You,
so that we may obtain an inheritance with Your elect,
especially with the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of
God,
with blessed Joseph, her Spouse,
with Your blessed Apostles and glorious Martyrs
and with all the Saints,
on whose constant intercession in Your presence
we rely for unfailing help.

May this Sacrifice of our reconciliation, we pray, O Lord,
advance the peace and salvation of all the world.
Be pleased to confirm in faith and charity
Your pilgrim Church on earth,
with Your servant N. our Pope and N. our Bishop,
the Order of Bishops, all the clergy,
and the entire people You have gained for Your own.

Listen graciously to the prayers of this family,
whom You have summoned before You:
in Your compassion, O merciful Father,

gather to Yourself all Your children
scattered throughout the world.

To our departed brothers and sisters
and to all who were pleasing to You
at their passing from this life,
give kind admittance to Your kingdom.
There we hope to enjoy for ever
the fullness of Your glory
through Christ our Lord,
through whom You bestow on the world all that is good.

Through Him, and with Him, and in Him...Amen.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United in the faith of Mary and Joseph,
and gathered in the peace of Bethlehem,
let us pray as the Savior taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil—
from the resentments that divide our homes,

and the fears that trouble our hearts.

As we await the joy of your coming,
grant us the courage to forgive and to begin again,
so that we may welcome your kingdom of peace and love,
as we wait in joyful hope
for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, born into the stillness of Bethlehem,
you spoke to your friends and said,
“Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.”
Look not upon our failures or fears,
but upon the faith and longing of your Church.
Heal the wounds that divide us,
calm the storms that trouble our hearts,
and grant us that peace which the world cannot give—
a peace rooted in forgiveness,
and in the love that makes us one in you,
who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
the Light who gathers all nations in peace.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

COMMUNION MEDITATION

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”
Tonight, God does not speak from the heavens but from a
cradle. He is no longer far — He is here, within reach,
within love. The manger is God’s open heart;
may we rest in it, and rise renewed by its peace.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord God, we have received the Bread of Heaven,
the gift of Your Son born among us.
As His light shines in our hearts,
make us bearers of His peace to others,
and witnesses of joy in our homes and world.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SOLEMN BLESSING

May the God of dawn scatter your darkness
and fill your hearts with the light of His love. **Amen.**

May the Child of Bethlehem dwell in your homes
and give you peace that the world cannot give. **Amen.**

And may the Spirit who gathered shepherds and kings
gather you in unity and keep you in joy,
now and forever. **Amen.**

**And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, + and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Let no darkness, no hurt, no fear
ever be stronger than that light.”

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life
and sharing the light of Christmas.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“Christmas is not only when God came into the world;
it is when light entered our hearts.

Night Mass: Is 9,1-7; Tit 2,11-14: Lk 2,1-14

“Light in the darkness—God’s presence breaking into our world, here and now, through the birth of Christ.”

INTRODUCTION

A little boy once walked with his father through the snow on Christmas Eve, heading to Midnight Mass. The night was dark, and he asked, “Papa, why go now, when it’s so dark? Couldn’t we just wait until morning when it’s bright?”

The father smiled and said, “Because Christmas began in the dark — and that’s when we need the light the most.” And that, dear friends, is why we are here tonight.

For the first Christmas didn’t happen under the glow of candles or the music of choirs. It happened in a forgotten corner of the world — in poverty, silence, and shadow. A

stable for a palace. A manger for a cradle. A frightened mother and a weary father holding the world’s greatest secret. And into that darkness, *Light* was born.

Every Christmas is a reminder that God still chooses the night to reveal His dawn. He comes not when everything is perfect, but when hearts are tired, families are struggling, and the world feels uncertain. That is when He whispers again, “Fear not, for I bring you good news of great joy.” So as we begin this holy celebration, let us bring before the manger not only our songs and candles, but also our shadows — the doubts, the disappointments, the dim corners of our hearts. For only those who walk in darkness can truly see how bright the Light is.

May this Eucharist open our eyes to see what the shepherds saw, our hearts to feel what Mary pondered, and our lives to be changed by the Child who changes everything — **for today, the Light has come.**

PENITENTIAL ACT

Brothers and sisters, before we welcome the Light who shines in our darkness, let us acknowledge the shadows

that still live within us and open our hearts to God's healing mercy.

Lord Jesus, You entered a world that had forgotten Your love. — *Lord, have mercy.*

Christ Jesus, You were born among the poor, to bring hope to the humble and peace to the broken. — *Christ, have mercy.*

Lord Jesus, You are the Light that no darkness can overcome. — *Lord, have mercy.*

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God, who has sent His only Son as Light for those who dwell in darkness, have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and lead us from the shadows of guilt into the brightness of His peace, and bring us all one day to everlasting life. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE GLORIA

Let us join the angels who filled the night sky with their song, and give glory to God who has come among us — the Child who changes everything.

COLLECT

Radiant God of endless light,
on this holy night You have pierced our darkness
with the brightness of Your love made flesh.
As we stand before the manger,
open our hearts to the Child who changes everything.
May His light heal our fears,
His peace mend our divisions,
and His love renew our world.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ,
Your Son, who lives and reigns with You...**Amen.**

HOMILY: “A Baby Changes Everything – Today the Light Has Come”

It was a snowy Christmas Eve in a small German town many years ago. A little boy was walking with his father to Midnight Mass. The road was dark except for a few lamps glowing through the mist. Suddenly the boy looked up and asked, “Papa, why do we have to go out in the dark to church? Couldn’t we just wait until morning when it’s

bright?" The father smiled and said, "Because, my son, Christmas began in the dark — and that's when we need the light the most."

That's the story of Christmas: *a light shining in the darkness.* Isaiah saw it centuries before it happened: *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."*

When he spoke those words, Jerusalem was not cozy with candles and carols. It was surrounded by the Assyrian army — fear, blood, and uncertainty everywhere.

And into that fear Isaiah dared to proclaim: *"A child is born to us ... the government shall be upon his shoulders."*

Even then, God was whispering the same truth He would announce one silent night in Bethlehem: Hope is born when a Child is born.

1. The Light That Shines in Our Darkness

Every Christmas, we light candles, decorate trees, and hang shining stars. But the light is not only decoration; it's declaration. It declares that darkness doesn't win.

And our world still needs that message. We live in an age of glowing screens but shadowed hearts — an age of anxiety, war, greed, and loneliness. Isaiah's words are more real today than ever: we too see soldiers' boots, bloodstained garments, and hear of people walking in the shadow of fear.

And yet — in the middle of it all — God still says: *"The people who walk in darkness will see a great light."* The Light is not a policy or a plan. It is a Person. A Baby whose name is *Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace.*

2. Today — Not Someday

The angel said to the shepherds, *"Today a Saviour has been born for you."*

Not "someday," not "when the world improves," but today. The long wait of the prophets, the longing of Israel, all find

their fulfilment in that small word — *today*.

And that “*today*” runs through Jesus’ whole life.

He told the people of Nazareth, “*Today this Scripture is fulfilled.*”

He told Zacchaeus, “*Today salvation has come to your house.*”

He told the dying thief, “*Today you will be with me in paradise.*”

Every time He speaks, He brings salvation into the present moment.

And that means Christmas is not just a memory — it’s a miracle that keeps happening.

Not “*back then in Bethlehem*,” but here and now.

Today — for you — a Saviour is born.

3. A Baby Changes Everything

Ask any parent, and they’ll tell you: a baby changes everything.

Sleep disappears. Priorities change. The house is louder, messier, holier in some way.

I once asked a young dad, “*How did fatherhood change you?*”

He said, “*I didn’t know how selfish I was until I had a baby.*” And isn’t that the truth? A baby rearranges your whole life — not by force, but by love.

That’s how God changes the world, too.

Not by military might or royal decree — but by a baby’s cry in a manger.

A baby who would grow to say, “*Love your enemies,*” and stretch out His arms on a cross to prove it.

That’s what Paul means in his letter to Titus:

“*The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all.*”

Grace has a name — Jesus.

This baby brings undeserved love into a world that had forgotten how to love.

He comes not to condemn but to redeem, not to demand perfection but to offer forgiveness.

This child really does change everything.

4. Living in the Gap — Between Grace and Glory

But Paul reminds us of something else.

We live “*in the gap*” — between the first coming of Christ and His second.

Between the grace that has appeared and the glory that will appear.

We’re still waiting. Waiting for peace in our homes, for healing in our hearts, for justice in our world. Waiting for Christ to return.

But this waiting is not idle. Grace trains us to live differently *today*.

Paul says it beautifully: “*It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age.*”

In other words: *A baby changes everything — so let Him change you too.*

Let His gentleness soften your harsh words.

Let His generosity melt your selfishness.

Let His peace quiet the wars in your heart.

That’s how we live between the manger and the clouds — waiting, but with purpose.

5. “Today” Can Still Happen

I once heard a true story from a young priest in Germany. It was Christmas Eve, and a couple sat alone at home, childless and disappointed with life.

The husband had drifted from faith; the wife was simply tired.

He leafed through their Christmas cards and found one that read: “*Today a Saviour is born for you.*”

That one word *today* pierced his heart.

He went out, found the church locked, knocked on the rectory door and said,

“*Please, Father, could I just sit in the church for a while?*”

He stayed before the crib for nearly an hour.

When he came out, his face was shining.

The darkness hadn’t vanished, but the Light had entered it.

That’s what Christmas can do.

It doesn’t erase the night — it makes it bright.

6. From Darkness to Light

When we allow this Child to rule our hearts, families, and

communities, Isaiah's prophecy comes true again:

"The yoke of oppression is broken."

When Christ governs a heart, pride gives way to peace.

When He governs a home, grudges melt into forgiveness.

When He governs a people, selfishness becomes generosity.

When He governs the world, swords turn into ploughshares.

And so tonight, before this Child, each of us can whisper:

"Lord, take the government of my life upon Your shoulders."

Because it truly rests there — not on kings or presidents, not on the mighty or the wealthy — but on Him, the Prince of Peace.

7. The Gift That Never Breaks

Every Christmas gift fades. Toys break, gadgets go out of date, chocolates disappear too soon.

But this gift — the gift of Christ — never wears out, never gets old, never runs out of power.

He is the one gift you can never lose.

As one old carol says:

*"I lay in deepest night and cold,
You were my sun, my light, my joy."*

Tonight, that same sun rises again.

The grace of God has appeared.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. A baby has changed everything.

Conclusion Story

A missionary once told of visiting a village in Africa where electricity had just been installed. On the first night, the people gathered to see the great switch turned on. The darkness vanished in an instant, and they gasped in awe. An old woman began to sing softly, *"The light has come."*

That's Christmas in one line: *the light has come.*

But it is not a light out there — it's a light meant to shine *in here.*

So tonight, as you kneel before the crib, remember: You are not just looking at a baby.

You are looking at the Light of the world,
the grace of God in human form,
the Saviour born *for you — today*. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE CREDO

Dear brothers and sisters,
on this holy night when the eternal Word became flesh
and the Light of God entered our world,
let us stand and profess together the faith
that gives meaning to our joy and strength to our hope.
Let us proclaim what we believe —
in the God who came as a Child to change everything.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Brothers and sisters, as we bring these gifts of bread and wine, let us also offer the gift of our hearts — that the Light of Christ may be born anew in us this night. Pray that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God the Father almighty.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

O God of Bethlehem and of every heart that longs for peace, accept the gifts we bring tonight —

signs of our gratitude for the Child who brings grace to all. As this bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Your Son, transform our hearts into living mangers where His love may dwell and His light may shine. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PREFACE - The Light Has Come

It is truly right and just, our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give You thanks, Father of mercy and Lord of light.

For in the silence of this holy night,
You spoke Your Word — and the darkness fled.
The heavens opened, angels sang,
and shepherds found hope in a manger.
In the cry of a newborn Child,
You announced peace to the world, and joy to every heart.

Therefore, with the choirs of angels and all creation radiant with wonder, we join in their hymn of praise, as we sing: **Holy, Holy, Holy...**

EUCARISTIC PRAYER III

You are indeed Holy, O Lord,
and all you have created
rightly gives you praise,
for through your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,
by the power and working of the Holy Spirit,
you give life to all things and make them holy,
and you never cease to gather a people to yourself,
so that from the rising of the sun to its setting
a pure sacrifice may be offered to your name.

*On this holy night, O Father, when the people who walked
in darkness have seen a great light,
we give you thanks that your presence has broken into our
world through the birth of your Son.*

*As once your glory shone upon shepherds in the fields, let
that same light now fall upon this altar,
so that in this Eucharist we may recognize Christ among
us — the Child who changes everything, the Light no
darkness can overcome.*

Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore you:
by the same Spirit graciously make holy
these gifts we have brought to you for consecration,
that they may become the Body and Blood
of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,
at whose command we celebrate these mysteries.

For on the night he was betrayed,
he himself took bread,
and, giving you thanks, he said the blessing,
broke the bread
and gave it to his disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,
FOR THIS IS MY BODY,
WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.**

In a similar way, when supper was ended,
he took the chalice,
and, giving you thanks, he said the blessing,
and gave the chalice to his disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT,
FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,
THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT,
WHICH WILL BE POURED OUT FOR YOU AND FOR
MANY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.
DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.**

The mystery of faith.

Therefore, O Lord, as we celebrate the memorial
of the saving Passion of your Son,
his wondrous Resurrection and Ascension into heaven,
and as we look forward to his second coming,
we offer you in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice.

*Lord, on this night of radiant peace,
we remember not only what your Son once did in
Bethlehem,
but what He does even now —
entering the darkness of our lives to bring His light.
May this memorial of His love renew in us the joy of that
first “Today”:*

*for a Saviour has been born for us.
Make our hearts mangers open to His presence,
our homes beacons of His peace,
and our world a place where His light still shines.*

Look, we pray, upon the oblation of your Church
and, recognizing the sacrificial Victim
by whose death you willed to reconcile us to yourself,
grant that we, who are nourished
by the Body and Blood of your Son
and filled with his Holy Spirit,
may become one body, one spirit in Christ.

May he make of us an eternal offering to you,
so that we may obtain an inheritance with your elect,
especially with the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of
God,
with blessed Joseph, her Spouse,
with your blessed Apostles and glorious Martyrs
and with all the Saints,

on whose constant intercession in your presence
we rely for unfailing help.

May this Sacrifice of our reconciliation, we pray, O Lord,
advance the peace and salvation of all the world.

Be pleased to confirm in faith and charity
your pilgrim Church on earth,
with your servant N. our Pope and N. our Bishop,
the Order of Bishops, all the clergy,
and the entire people you have gained for your own.

Listen graciously to the prayers of this family,
whom you have summoned before you:
in your compassion, O merciful Father,
gather to yourself all your children
scattered throughout the world.

To our departed brothers and sisters
and to all who were pleasing to you
at their passing from this life,
give kind admittance to your kingdom.
There we hope to enjoy for ever

the fullness of your glory through Christ our Lord,
through whom you bestow on the world
all that is good.

Through Him, and with Him, and in Him... Amen.

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

As children of the Light and heirs of the promise, let us
pray with the words of the Saviour who was born among
us:

EMBOLISM

Lord Jesus Christ,
born into the peace of Bethlehem,
You know how fragile our peace can be.
Deliver us, Lord, from every evil —
from the resentments that divide our homes
and the fears that cloud our hearts.
As we await the blessed hope
and the coming of Your glory,
grant us the courage to forgive,
the humility to serve,

and the faith to walk as children of light,
so that, trusting in Your mercy,
we may be free from sin
and safe from all distress,
as we await your joyful coming
as our Saviour, O Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, born into our darkness as a tiny Child,
You said to Your apostles:
“Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.”

Look not on our fears or our divisions,
but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her the peace that comes from You.
May the Light that shone in Bethlehem
shine in every heart tonight,
uniting families, healing wounds,
and bringing hope where despair has lingered.
You who live and reign forever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Child who changes everything —
the Light who shines in our darkness,
the Bread come down from heaven.

Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

A child's cry once broke the night in Bethlehem.
It still breaks the silence of our fears.
Let that cry echo in our hearts tonight —
calling us from darkness to light,
from pride to peace,
from self to love.

A baby has changed everything —
and that baby lives in us now.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Lord our God,
You have fed us with the Bread of heaven
and filled us with the Light of Your Son.
May this holy communion strengthen in us
the grace that appeared in Bethlehem,

so that we may shine with His love
in the world He came to save.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SOLEMN BLESSING

May the God of endless light, who dispelled the darkness
of this world by the birth of His Son, make your hearts
radiant with His presence. — *Amen.*

May the Child of Bethlehem fill your homes with peace and
your days with joy. — *Amen.*

And may the Holy Spirit who overshadowed Mary
guide you to bear Christ's light into every place of
darkness. — *Amen.*

And may almighty God bless you, the Father , and the
Son, and the Holy Spirit.
— *Amen.*

DISMISSAL

Go now in the peace and joy of Christ.
The Light has come — let it shine through you.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“Christmas doesn't erase the night — it makes it bright.
The Light has come, not to stay in the manger,
but to dwell in your heart.
Let Him change everything — today.”

shared among us.

One cold winter night, the electricity went out in a small town. The entire neighbourhood was plunged into darkness — except for one house that still glowed warmly. When the neighbours came to see how it still had light, they discovered a family gathered around their fireplace, singing softly, their faces lit by the flame. The father smiled and said, *“When there’s love in the home, there’s always light.”* That is the message of Christmas morning.

When God saw the darkness of our world — the loneliness, fear, and sin that chilled the human heart — He lit a flame that nothing can extinguish. That flame is His Son, born for us, to share our weakness and to fill our night with love’s warm light.

Let us now open our hearts to the Savior born among us — the One who brings peace by teaching us to share love.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus,

DAWN MASS (Shepherds' Mass)

Is 62,11-12; Titus 3,4-7; Lk 2,15-20

The Joy and Peace of the Savior through Sharing Love

INTRODUCTION

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
welcome to this radiant morning — the dawn of divine love

You were born in poverty to make us rich in mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus,

You came to gather the scattered and heal the broken.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus,

You fill our darkness with your saving light.

Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God, who shared His love by sending His only Son, forgive us our sins, renew His peace within us, and lead us into the joy that comes from living in His love, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE GLORIA

On this holy morning, when heaven and earth embrace, let us join the angels' song of joy and peace.

Together we proclaim the glory of God:

Glory to God in the highest...

COLLECT

God of dawn and tenderness,

Your love took flesh in the silence of Bethlehem's night, and Your peace was sung first by angels to shepherds.

Kindle in our hearts that same radiant joy,

so that, sharing Your love with one another, we may bring peace where there is fear and light where there is darkness.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY

1. Introduction – A Story of Shared Love

A

few years ago, an 11-year-old boy undergoing chemotherapy lost all his hair. He dreaded returning to school, fearing ridicule from classmates. His parents tried hats, scarves, and wigs, but he finally chose a simple baseball cap. On his first day back, trembling with anxiety, he entered his classroom—and froze. Every boy in his

class had shaved his head. They wanted him to know he wasn't alone. Their solidarity said more than words: "*We share your pain because we love you.*"

That is Christmas. That is incarnation. God saw our pain, our loneliness, our sin—and did not stay distant. He entered our human story, sharing our flesh, our tears, our hunger, our death. No wonder St. John could summarize Christmas in one radiant sentence: "*God so loved the world that He gave His only Son.*" (Jn 3:16)

2. The Message of Christmas Dawn

This Mass at dawn invites us to saviour the lasting peace and heavenly joy that come from the Savior — by living lives of *shared love*. Isaiah foretold this love as a light breaking into the ruins of Jerusalem, a God who saves and restores. Paul proclaimed it as pure mercy, not earned but freely given, rebirthing us in Baptism as heirs of eternal life. And Luke shows it unfolding in the simplest of places: a stable, a manger, and a few shepherds who were the first to receive the news of divine love.

3. The Shepherds – Chosen Messengers of Love

The shepherds of Bethlehem were not the clean, respectable kind. They were despised, unable to observe religious laws, excluded from polite society. Yet *they* were the first to hear heaven's music. God's choice was deliberate. The message of Christmas is not for the privileged, but for the poor and forgotten; not for those who have everything, but for those who know they need a Saviour.

Perhaps those shepherds were tending the temple flocks — lambs destined for sacrifice. If so, it was fitting that *they* should be the first to see "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." They heard the angel say: "*Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy for all people. Today in the city of David, a Savior has been born for you — Christ the Lord.*"

The shepherds' response was simple but profound: they *went in haste*, found the Child, worshipped Him, and then *made known the message*. They didn't just receive love; they shared it. In that moment, they became the first evangelists, the first apostles of Christmas.

4. The Angels' Song – A Call to Share Peace

When Jesus was born, angels sang what human lips could not: *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.”*

In Jewish tradition, when a boy was born, musicians gathered to sing at his door. But in Bethlehem, no musician came. So heaven's choir descended. Where the world saw poverty, heaven saw majesty. Where there was no welcome on earth, heaven opened its doors.

This “peace on earth” is not the mere absence of war, but the presence of love — a peace that enters hearts and overflows into generosity. Only those who *share love* can receive it. The angels' song becomes real only when our love reaches the unloved, when our forgiveness heals the unforgiven, when our kindness brings light into someone's night.

5. False Saviors and the True Savior

History has known many false “saviors”:

- Philosophers who promised liberation through knowledge,
- Politicians who promised paradise through power,
- Movements that promised freedom through revolution,
- Modern prophets who promise peace through pleasure, wealth, or technology.

But none have brought lasting joy or peace. True joy and peace come only through *love shared in Christ*. Jesus did not liberate us by force but by compassion; not from above but from within. He entered the manger of our humanity to transform it from the inside out.

As one little story tells:

A poor woman once said to a visiting priest, “Father, I have no gifts to bring Jesus.” The priest replied, “Then give Him *yourself*, and He will share Himself with others through you.” That is the secret of Christmas joy: when we share the Savior who lives within us.

6. From Fear to Joy – The Journey of the Shepherds The shepherds' first emotion was *fear*. But fear became faith when they heard the angel's words: "*Do not be afraid.*" Fear became movement when they said, "*Let us go to Bethlehem.*"

Faith became witness when they proclaimed, "*We have seen the Lord!*"

Their journey mirrors our own. Christmas calls us from fear to faith, from receiving love to sharing it. The peace of Bethlehem is not meant to stay in our hearts; it is meant to be multiplied in our homes, our parishes, our communities.

7. Life Message – Become Christ-Bearers and Christ-Givers

The poet Alexander Pope once wrote:

"What do I profit if Jesus is born in thousands of cribs all over the world, if He is not born in my heart?"

Every Christmas we are invited to become Bethlehem — to let Christ be born anew in our compassion, our patience, our generosity.

We can be modern shepherds by:

- Sharing time with someone lonely,
- Forgiving someone who wronged us,
- Visiting someone sick or forgotten,
- Speaking words that heal, not wound.

Like the shepherds, we are called not just to *adore* the Child but to *announce* Him. The joy of Christmas grows only when it is shared.

8. Conclusion – The Empty Chair

One Christmas morning, a little girl noticed an empty chair at the family table. Her father explained, "That's for your Uncle Ben, who works as a missionary in Africa. We leave it for him every year."

The girl thought for a moment and then placed her own plate on the chair. "If Jesus came today," she said, "I'd want Him to sit there."

My dear brothers and sisters, the real miracle of Christmas is that Jesus *does* come today — not in royal robes but in

the hungry, the lonely, the refugee, the neighbour, the child, the sick, the one who needs your love.

When we make room for them, we make room for Him.

When we share love, we share His peace.

When we, like the shepherds, glorify and praise God through our lives, the angels' song becomes our own: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will." Amen.

INVITATION TO THE CREDO

With the shepherds, we go in haste to Bethlehem.

With them, we kneel before the Child of peace.

Let us now profess our faith in the God who became one of us.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

My friends,
as the shepherds offered their praise and Mary her heart,
let us now offer our gifts of bread and wine,
symbols of our love shared with one another and with God

and let us pray that they may be acceptable to God the Father almighty...

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Loving Father,

You accepted the humble gifts of shepherds and magi alike. Receive the gifts we bring today — not only bread and wine, but our desire to share Your love. Sanctify these offerings and make them signs of the peace and joy that Your Son brought into the world. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE – "THE PEACE OF LOVE SHARED"

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our deepest joy,
always and everywhere to give You thanks,
holy Father, source of all love and light.

When we had lost our way,
You sent Your Son to share our life —
to laugh our laughter, to weep our tears,

to carry our pain, and to teach us Your peace.
In the silence of the manger,
Your Word took flesh;
and through His birth,
the heavens sang and the shepherds rejoiced.

Even now, with the angels who once filled the sky,
we lift our voices in gratitude and praise,
as we sing the hymn of Your glory:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts...

by the power and working of the Holy Spirit,
You give life to all things and make them holy,
and You never cease to gather a people to Yourself,
so that from the rising of the sun to its setting
a pure sacrifice may be offered to Your name.

*On this radiant dawn of Christmas, O Father,
as shepherds once gathered at the manger of love,
we too draw near to the table of Your Son.
He is the true Light who scatters our darkness,
the Prince of Peace who teaches us to share love.
As we recall the mystery of His birth,
fill us with the joy that comes from giving,
and with the peace that flows from hearts open to others.*

THE THIRD EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

You are indeed Holy, O Lord,
and all You have created
rightly gives You praise,
for through Your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,

**Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore You:
by the same Spirit graciously make holy these gifts
we have brought to You for consecration,
that they may become the Body and + Blood
of Your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,
at whose command we celebrate these mysteries.**

For on the night He was betrayed
He Himself took bread,
and, giving You thanks, He said the blessing,
broke the bread and gave it to His disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,
FOR THIS IS MY BODY,
WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.**

In a similar way, when supper was ended,
He took the chalice,
and, giving You thanks, He said the blessing,
and gave the chalice to His disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT,
FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,
THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT,
WHICH WILL BE POURED OUT FOR YOU AND FOR
MANY
FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.
DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.**

The mystery of faith...

Therefore, O Lord,
as we celebrate the memorial
of the saving Passion of Your Son,
His wondrous Resurrection and Ascension into heaven,
and as we look forward to His second coming,
we offer You in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice.

As the shepherds went in haste to share what they had seen,

*so may we who share this heavenly food
go forth as bearers of Your peace and love.*

*Grant that the joy of Bethlehem
may shine through our families and communities,
that those who dwell in darkness
may find in us the warmth of Your saving light.*

Look, we pray, upon the oblation of Your Church
and, recognizing the sacrificial Victim
by whose death You willed to reconcile us to Yourself,
grant that we, who are nourished

by the Body and Blood of Your Son
and filled with His Holy Spirit,
may become one body, one spirit in Christ.

May He make of us an eternal offering to You,
so that we may obtain an inheritance with Your elect,
especially with the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of
God,
with blessed Joseph, her Spouse,
with Your blessed Apostles and glorious Martyrs,
and with all the Saints,
on whose constant intercession in Your presence
we rely for unfailing help.

May this Sacrifice of our reconciliation, we pray, O Lord,
advance the peace and salvation of all the world.

Be pleased to confirm in faith and charity
Your pilgrim Church on earth,
with Your servant N. our Pope and N. our Bishop,
the Order of Bishops, all the clergy,
and the entire people You have gained for Your own.

Listen graciously to the prayers of this family,
whom You have summoned before You:
in Your compassion, O merciful Father,
gather to Yourself all Your children
scattered throughout the world.

To our departed brothers and sisters
and to all who were pleasing to You
at their passing from this life,
give kind admittance to Your kingdom.

There we hope to enjoy forever
the fullness of Your glory
through Christ our Lord,
through whom You bestow on the world
all that is good.

Through Him, and with Him, and in Him... Amen.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At Bethlehem, heaven touched earth,
and the Word became our brother.

In that same spirit of trust and tenderness, let us pray:

EMBOLISM

Lord Jesus Christ,
born into the cold night of our world,
You bring warmth where there is hatred
and light where there is darkness.
Deliver us, Lord, from every evil;
grant us the peace that angels sang of this night.
By Your mercy, free us from sin,
protect us from fear,
and fill our hearts with joy
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, You said to Your apostles,
“Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.”
Look not on our sins,
but on our willingness to share love.

Grant peace to Your Church,
to our families, and to our troubled world,
that Your joy may be complete in us —
You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
born in a manger yet Lord of heaven,
who takes away the sin of the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

“The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God.”
Lord, make me a shepherd today.
Let me carry Your joy to someone who has lost hope.
Let me bring Your peace where there is conflict.
Let me share Your love where there is loneliness.
May Your presence in this Eucharist
be born again in the humble stable of my heart.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

God of tender mercy,

You have fed us with the Bread of Heaven,
the very love You shared in Your Son's birth.

May this holy meal fill us with Your peace
and make us messengers of joy, so that, like the
shepherds, we may glorify You in word and deed,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SOLEMN BLESSING

May the God of love who sent His Son among us
fill your hearts with lasting joy. Amen.

May the light of Bethlehem guide your steps
and the peace of Christ dwell in your homes. Amen.

**And may Almighty God bless you,
the Father ☧, and the Son ☧, and the Holy Spirit ☧.**

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go forth, like the shepherds,
to share the joy and peace of the Savior.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

Christmas joy is not something we keep — it is something we share.

When you bring love where there is pain,
you make Bethlehem happen again.

Mass of the Day – Christmas

Is 52:7–10; Heb 1:1–6; Jn 1:1–18

“God opens the door of Heaven and seeks a home in human hearts.”

INTRODUCTION The Locked Church at Midnight”

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
welcome to this joyful celebration of Christmas — the feast
of God’s open door.

A few winters ago, a small town in the mountains had
heavy snow on Christmas Eve. The parish priest arrived
early to prepare for Midnight Mass — but found the church

doors frozen shut. The lock had jammed, and no key would turn. One by one, people began arriving through the storm, stamping the snow off their boots, but no one could enter. Then a little girl tugged her father’s coat and said, “If we can’t get in, let’s sing out here. Maybe Jesus will come out to us.”

And so, in the freezing dark, the villagers began to sing *Silent Night* under the falling snow. Someone brought a candle, another shared a flask of hot tea, and in that moment, the street became a church — their hearts became the altar. Later, when the lock finally turned, they entered to find the church already full of warmth — not from the heaters, but from love.

That is Christmas: when doors close, God opens hearts. When we cannot come in, He comes out to meet us. As we begin this sacred celebration, let us open not only these church doors, but the doors of our hearts, that Christ may find a home within us — not in perfect places, but in hearts that whisper, “*Lord, there is room for You here.*”

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, You knock gently at the doors of our hearts;
for the times we kept You waiting, Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You come to us as the Word made flesh;
for the times we failed to welcome You in our neighbour,
Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You are the light that shines in our darkness;
for the times we hid in the shadows of fear or pride,
Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May the God of endless compassion open the doors of His mercy to us, forgive our sins, renew our hearts, and make us worthy to celebrate the mystery of His birth with joy and peace and bring us all one day to everlasting life. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE GLORIA

Brothers and sisters,
on this holy day when Heaven's door stands open
and angels fill the night with song, let us join their hymn of praise. With hearts awakened by joy and voices lifted in wonder, we glorify the God who has come to dwell among

us: ***Glory to God in the highest...***

COLLECT

God of all light and love, in the silence of Bethlehem You spoke Your Word made flesh. Open our hearts to welcome Him anew — that our homes may become His dwelling, our lives His living Gospel, and our world a place where all find room. Through the same Christ our Lord...Amen.

HOMILY– “Open Doors: The Gift of God Made Flesh”

A little boy once took part in his school's Christmas Nativity play. He had only one line: when Mary and Joseph arrived at the inn, he was to shake his head and say, “Sorry, there's no room.” But when the moment came, and he saw Mary holding her little doll as the baby Jesus, he froze. The audience waited. Then, moved by a sudden compassion, he blurted out:

“Wait! You can have my room!”

The audience laughed, but there were tears too. Because that child had understood Christmas better than most adults do. Christmas is about open doors — and open

hearts. It is about making room for God who longs to dwell among us.

“He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.”

This single sentence from John’s Gospel has always struck me deeply. For centuries, humanity had been waiting for the Messiah — the Savior who would bring peace and redemption. Yet when He finally came, there was no room for Him. The inns were full, the homes were shut, the city gates were closed.

But look closer — wherever He *is* born, doors open. In the poor stable, perhaps with no door at all, everyone finds their way in. Shepherds hurry, wise men travel far, angels sing above, and even the animals share their space. Only the proud and the powerful stay locked behind closed doors.

And so, this morning, we ask ourselves:

Are our doors open? Not only the doors of our homes or churches — but the doors of our hearts, our communities, our institutions?

“Christmas Cancelled?”

A few years ago, during the height of the pandemic, the news broke: *“Christmas is cancelled!”*

No gatherings, no travel, no grand dinners — people were left alone. I remember spending that Christmas in a quiet hall of residence in Leeds, far from home, far from family. I had no presents, no parties, only a few Christmas cards I’d saved to open on Christmas morning.

But that lonely Christmas became a revelation. I realized that even when everything else is stripped away — the decorations, the feasts, even the company — the heart of Christmas remains: Christ and the Mass.

“Christ-Mass.” The name itself tells the truth: as long as there is Christ and as long as there is the Eucharist, Christmas cannot be cancelled.

“And the Word Became Flesh.”

This breathtaking truth is the centre of our faith:

A God with a human face.

A God who looks at us through human eyes.

Who listens with a human heart.

He doesn't merely speak from afar; He draws near, takes flesh, and makes His home among us.

Bethlehem means “House of Bread.”

And the manger — that humble feeding trough — becomes the first altar.

The same Jesus, once laid in a manger, now lies upon our altars, under the appearance of bread.

He, the Living Bread, feeds us with His own life.

We become the true Bethlehem — the living houses where God chooses to dwell.

“The Closed Door”

A young mother once told me that her son, aged seven, had locked himself in his room after a quarrel. She stood outside, knocking gently, saying, “Please, open the door. I love you.”

There was silence for a while, then a small voice replied:

“I’ll open when you stop being angry.”

And she said softly, “But I stopped being angry the moment I started missing you.”

Isn’t that what God says to us today? He knocks at the doors of our hearts and says:

“I am not angry with you. I just miss you.”

That is Christmas — the God who misses us enough to come searching for us.

“He Came to His Own”

He came into our ordinary world — a world of laughter and tears, hope and fear, sin and grace. He came not as a judge, but as a friend.

Pope Benedict XVI once said:

“Today, the true light that enlightens everyone comes into the world... To all who receive Him, He gives power to become children of God.”

That is the invitation: to receive Him — to open the door — to make room.

Because when we make room for Christ, we automatically make room for others — for the elderly woman in need, the lonely neighbour, the difficult child, the foreigner, the homeless man, the friend who has lost hope.

To welcome Christ is to welcome all those He identifies with.

“A Gift in Ebomkop”

I once heard a missionary from Cameroon tell this story.

He grew up in a poor village called Ebomkop. One Christmas, his family had no food, no gifts, and no lights. But that night, a neighbour came with a small pot of rice and a few plantains. He said simply, “You are my family too.”

The missionary said, “That was the night I learned what Christmas means. It means no one should fight the battle of life alone.”

Every act of kindness — a plate of food, a visit to the sick, a word of comfort — becomes a Bethlehem where Christ is born again. Every open door brings His light into a dark world.

“The Light Shines in the Darkness”

Our world today seems dark — wars, poverty, loneliness, loss of faith. And yet, John’s Gospel reminds us:

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

The child in the manger is the light that cannot be extinguished. He brings grace upon grace — gift upon gift.

And so, even if this has been a hard year for you, even if you are grieving, doubting, or struggling — this day is still *for you*. The Christ who was born in Bethlehem wants to be born anew in your heart.

Blessed Jordan’s Letter

Many centuries ago, Blessed Jordan of Saxony was separated from a dear friend at Christmas. He wrote to her these tender words:

“I send you a very little word — the Word made little in the crib, the Word made flesh for us, the Word of salvation and grace, sweetness and glory: Jesus Christ. Read over that Word in your heart, let it be sweet as honey on your lips, ponder it and dwell on it, that it may dwell with you and in you forever.”

That is my wish for you this Christmas:
That the Word made flesh may dwell in you and through
you, that your doors may remain open,
that Christ may find welcome in your heart and in your
home.

Then the words of the Gospel will be reversed:
“He came — and was received. He found welcome and felt
loved.” And that, dear friends, is Christmas.

“Lord Jesus, Child of Bethlehem,
make our hearts your Bethlehem today.
Open our doors to Your love,
that we may open our hands to our neighbour,
and let the light of Your presence
shine through our lives into the world. Amen.”

INVITATION TO THE CREDO

Having listened to the Word made flesh
and received the Good News of His dwelling among us,
let us now profess our faith —
the faith that opens every door,

the faith of the Church throughout the ages,
the faith in which we welcome Christ,
our Emmanuel and our Lord: **I believe in one God...**

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Brothers and sisters, as we bring these gifts to the altar —
the bread and wine, signs of our human labour and love —
let us also offer the doors of our hearts,
that Christ may enter and make His home within us.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Loving Father,
on this holy day when Heaven’s door opened upon the
world, receive our gifts and transform them into the Body
and Blood of Your Son.

May every table where bread is broken become a
Bethlehem of grace, and every heart that welcomes Him
become His living manger. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE – “The God Who Opened the Door”

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our joy,

always and everywhere to give You thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
For in the birth of Your Son, the door between Heaven and
earth was opened.

The Word became flesh,
and You chose to dwell among the poor and the small.

The manger became a throne,
and human hearts became Your home.

Through Him, the darkness of sin is scattered by the light
of love, and hope is born anew for all creation.

And so, with angels and shepherds, with stars and saints,
we join the endless hymn of praise,
as we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts...

THE THIRD EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

You are indeed Holy, O Lord,
and all You have created
rightly gives You praise,

for through Your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,
by the power and working of the Holy Spirit,
You give life to all things and make them holy,
and You never cease to gather a people to Yourself,
so that from the rising of the sun to its setting
a pure sacrifice may be offered to Your name.

*“Lord, as we offer this bread and wine, we remember that
You, the Word made flesh, came to dwell among us. Just
as You opened the door of Heaven at Bethlehem, may
Your Spirit open the doors of our hearts. May the light of
Your presence, shining in the darkness, transform our lives
into living mangers where the Word finds a home. May we
welcome You not only in our worship but in every act of
love we extend to others.”*

**Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore You:
by the same Spirit graciously make holy these gifts
we have brought to You for consecration,
that they may become the Body and + Blood**

**of Your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,
at whose command we celebrate these mysteries.**

For on the night He was betrayed
He Himself took bread,
and, giving You thanks, He said the blessing,
broke the bread and gave it to His disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,
FOR THIS IS MY BODY,
WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.**

In a similar way, when supper was ended,
He took the chalice,
and, giving You thanks, He said the blessing,
and gave the chalice to His disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT,
FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,
THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT,
WHICH WILL BE POURED OUT FOR YOU AND FOR
MANY**

**FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.
DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.**

The mystery of faith...

Therefore, O Lord,
as we celebrate the memorial
of the saving Passion of Your Son,
His wondrous Resurrection and Ascension into heaven,
and as we look forward to His second coming,
we offer You in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice.

“Father, this is the mystery we celebrate: the Word made flesh, lying in a manger, now given to us on this altar. May the same Christ who came into the world to seek a home in human hearts dwell in us through this Eucharist. Let us be living Bethlehems, open to Your love, ready to share Your light with the world.”

Look, we pray, upon the oblation of Your Church
and, recognizing the sacrificial Victim
by whose death You willed to reconcile us to Yourself,

grant that we, who are nourished
by the Body and Blood of Your Son
and filled with His Holy Spirit,
may become one body, one spirit in Christ.

May He make of us an eternal offering to You,
so that we may obtain an inheritance with Your elect,
especially with the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of
God,
with blessed Joseph, her Spouse,
with Your blessed Apostles and glorious Martyrs,
and with all the Saints,
on whose constant intercession in Your presence
we rely for unfailing help.

May this Sacrifice of our reconciliation, we pray, O Lord,
advance the peace and salvation of all the world.
Be pleased to confirm in faith and charity
Your pilgrim Church on earth,
with Your servant N. our Pope and N. our Bishop,

the Order of Bishops, all the clergy,
and the entire people You have gained for Your own.

Listen graciously to the prayers of this family,
whom You have summoned before You:
in Your compassion, O merciful Father,
gather to Yourself all Your children
scattered throughout the world.

To our departed brothers and sisters
and to all who were pleasing to You
at their passing from this life,
give kind admittance to Your kingdom.

There we hope to enjoy forever
the fullness of Your glory
through Christ our Lord,
through whom You bestow on the world
all that is good.

Through Him, and with Him, and in Him... Amen.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,

let us pray as children of the God
who opened Heaven's door for us:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and from the darkness that closes hearts and homes.
By the light of this holy birth, grant peace to our days,
that, by the help of Your mercy,
we may be always free from sin
and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
born in the stillness of the night and laid in a manger of
peace,
look not on our sins but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with Your will —
You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold Him who takes away the sins of the world.
Blessed are those who open the door
and welcome Him to their table.

COMMUNION MEDITATION

“Lord Jesus, Child of Bethlehem,
You found no room in the inn, yet You find a home in our
hearts.
Come, dwell with us.
Turn our loneliness into love,
our fears into faith,
our homes into Bethlehems of Your peace.”

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,
You have entered our hearts in this Eucharist,
as once You entered the stable of Bethlehem.
Stay with us now,

that our lives may bear Your light
and our words Your warmth.
Make us messengers of the open door,
so that no one feels shut out of Your love.
You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

SOLEMN BLESSING

May the God of everlasting light, who scattered the darkness of the world by the birth of His Son, bless you and keep you in His peace. Amen.

May Christ, born for you in Bethlehem,
dwell in your hearts and fill your homes with joy. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit,
who overshadowed Mary and brought forth the Word made flesh, make you bearers of that Word in the world. Amen.

**And may Almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son ☩, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go now, with hearts wide open and doors unlocked, to bring the light of Bethlehem into every corner of the world.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“Christmas is not only the story of God finding room in a manger — it is the invitation for us to make room for Him in our lives. Every time you open your heart to another, a new Bethlehem is born.”