



Solemnity of Christmas – December 25, 2024

Community of St. Bridget
an inclusive catholic experience

Liturgist: Mary Eileen Collingwood



Light breaking through: Adobe stock

Suggestion: *Please have on hand bread and wine/juice, and a copy of this liturgy so you can fully participate.*

Into this day blazing shards of light that illumine the whole reality of existence appear. May the words we hear and share be such moments and may we be thankfully blessed by their gifts.

ALL: Together we open our hearts to the Holy Wonder of Life.

Lighting of the Candle: O Holy Creator of every nation and people, from the beginning of creation you have manifested your love. When our need for you was great, you sent Jesus to be born of Mary. *May this Christ light be a beacon of light for all the ages.* For into our lives Jesus brings hope, joy, peace, justice, compassion, and love.

Opening Song: ***From the Manger*** © 2024, Illustrated Ministry; illustrated ministry.com
<https://youtu.be/UvmOsYoOULI?si=uOK1o-lTzgixUF4I> (video – begin .12; stop 5.05)

A quiet town called House of Bread, a newborn baby falls asleep.
A bed of hay beneath his head, Immanuel begins to dream
For all creation to be fed.
Hope from the ground to the breaking of bread.

Refrain: From the manger Hope (Peace, Joy, Love) grows;
He will be God with Us.
From the manger Hope (Peace, Joy, Love) grows;
Bread of Life, Jesus.

A starry sky breaks forth with light, the angel says be not afraid.
Gloria to the highest heights, heavenly host are singing praise.
You'll find him as the angel said.

Peace from the heavens to the breaking of bread. **R**

From grassy field to Jesus' side, a humble shepherd runs back home.
Forever changed one holy night, compelled to make these wonders known.
From pastures green all will be fed.

Joy from the fields to the breaking of bread. **R** (x2)

Mary's baby closely held, wrapped up in sweet expectancy.
Now the Messiah is unveiled, embodied for the world to see,
So all creation can be fed.

Love will be found in the breaking of bread. **R** (x2)

Welcome Everyone on this great Solemnity of Christmas! Our chosen readings today remind us that the light of this season comes to us in the form of a child born. And who or what we choose to adore will determine who we are and what we will become. Responding to this light that has broken through the darkness, we bless ourselves in the name of the Divine: Source of All Life, Eternal Word, and +Holy Spirit Sophia. Amen.

Transformation Rite:* Our Advent prayer from the *O Antiphons* of our sacred tradition ushers in the birth of Christ. Pondering these ancient messages, we become transformed in the light of the Holy Child in our midst:

1. Wisdom is the ability to see the world as God sees it.

ALL: "Welcome, O Wisdom from above."

2. We are reminded that the Sacred One became human and, in so doing, breathes sacredness into every human life.

ALL: "Welcome, O Sacred One of Israel."

3. Jesse is the unknown one, the ancestor of David, from whose line would come the messiah. Jesse is the one who began a great work but did not live to see its end. Jesse is the one who was able to believe and to wait.

ALL: "Welcome, O Flower of Jesse's Stem."

4. We hear a searing cry for the kind of Christian commitment that opens doors and breaks down barriers between peoples.

ALL: "Welcome, O Key of David."

5. We ourselves need to become the kind of people whose lives bring light to the poorest of the poor wherever we go, in whatever we do.

ALL: "Welcome, O Radiant Dawn."

6. We welcome the One who will end the anguished waiting for peace by people everywhere.

ALL: “Welcome, O God of All the Earth.”

7. We sing the church’s long, last wail of desire that, this time, the Christ will finally be born in us.

ALL: “Welcome, O Welcome, Emmanuel.”

And now we lift our voices in glory to God:

Glory to God by Marty Haugen; Agapé: The Stories and the Feast © 1993 GIA Publications, Inc. Released on: 1993-01-01

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5xsdVs8HmM> (no video - begin at .20)

Refrain: Glory to God, in the highest! (x3)
And peace to God’s People on Earth.

We sing praises to you, God of Light, God of Wonder,
Hearts filled with joy, let our voices be thunder! And sing... **R**

Sing to Jesus the Christ, Word of Life to the nations,
Raised up in glory as our hope of salvation. O sing... **R**

In the Spirit we come for the feast and the stories
Seeing our God in the pain and the glory. O sing... **R**

Opening Prayer:

O Holy One, we enter sacred time, time suspended, when history surrenders to mystery, and we ourselves are taken in, and taken up, by a love story. As we take our place on the stage of sacred mystery to celebrate, you come to us in self-emptying love the moment we enter the realm of the Christmas birth this day and for all ages. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD**

We sense the movement of the Spirit of Life as we listen to the Scripture readings broken open and shared by all.

First Reading: Isaiah 9:1-6c

A reading from the prophet, Isaiah:

In darkness, a light was born. From deep darkness, a crest of dawn shines.
You enlarged life, and Your people were born.

Even though they knew pain and suffering, You increased their joy. They rejoice before You as with joy at the harvest, as children exult at play and delight in sharing gifts.

For You have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. Every warrior's boot that trampled in battle and every cloak rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for fire.

For unto us a child is born. For unto us a child is given on whose shoulders our futures rest.

This child will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Strength of God, Everlasting One, Voice of Peace. And of the peace the Child brings, there will be no end.

The inspired words of the prophet, Isaiah. Amen.

Responsorial: Psalm 96:1-2a; 4,5b; 6,10a; 11-13 (adapted)

Cantor: *Let the universe rejoice!*

Sing a new song to God!
Sing a new song, all the earth!
Sing to God, and bless The Holy Name! **R**

Great is God, and greatly to be praised,
revered above all, for God is Creator,
maker of the galaxies. **R**

Splendor and mystery announce God's presence!
Love and beauty are God's sanctuary.
Say among all peoples, "God reigns!" **R**

Let the universe resound in symphonic majesty!
Let Earth rejoice and be glad!
Let seas resound, and all that is in them!
Let plains and fields rejoice, and all that is in them!
Let the trees of the forests rejoice before God who comes,
Who comes to Earth, to the world, bringing healing justice to all peoples. **R**

Cantor: Alleluias

Second Reading – Gospel: Luke 2:1-20

A reading from the Holy Gospel attributed to Luke:

In those days, a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first census and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David and Bathsheba. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was pledged to be married and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. She gave birth to her firstborn. She wrapped her

newborn in swaddling clothes. She laid the baby in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night when an angel, a messenger of God, stood before them. The glory of God shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them: “Do not be afraid. For behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy for all people: Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Messiah, the Anointed One. This will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly, with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host joined in, praising God and singing, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on Earth peace to all God's people!”

When the angels departed from them, retreating into cosmic splendor, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which God has made known to us.” They went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said.

Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned to their fields, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, which was just as they had been told.

The inspired words of the evangelist, Luke. Amen.

Cantor: Alleluias

Third Reading: Hebrews 1:1-3, 6, 8-9 (adapted)

A reading from a letter to the Hebrews:

In times past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways. In these last days, God has spoken to us through the Christ, the Messiah, whom God appointed heir of all things and through whom God made the universe. This Universal Christ is the radiance of God's glory and the fullness of God's being, sustaining all things by a powerful word. After Jesus' life and death, the Universal Christ filled the majesty of the heavens.

When God brings a holy child into the world, God says: “Let all God's angels give praise.”

About the Christ, God says: “Your reign will last for ever and ever! A scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and shunned evil. Therefore God, your God, anointed you Messiah, with the oil of joy.”

The inspired words of an Early Christian Apologist. Amen.

Homily/Reflection: Mary Eileen

The Season of Advent brought with it the longing and yearning for Wisdom's enlightenment, for peace in our hearts and world, for joy on our faces and in our song, for a hope that will not let go—a hope that propels us into deepening our faith. And through that journey, we become the branches of the Christ Child. His incarnation becomes our identity. Breaking through the darkness the light of Christ's birth enlarges our lives, and we are born once again. We birth the Divine in our lives with our every holy act and heartfelt intention. For where love and beauty are found, we will find the sanctuary—the dwelling place of God.

Each time a child is born, the future rests on their shoulders. From life's beginning, hope, peace, joy and love grow—from the ground, from the heavens, from the fields, Love is found each and every time we break bread. That bread may be the bread of understanding, of mercy, of peaceful rest, of loving—despite the challenges we face. Bread sustains our lives and the lives of others whatever form it takes to keep us whole.

Entering the realm of the Christmas birth is a choice. And each day is a new opportunity to remember that special birth. May we embrace this awareness and hold it close. May the spark of the Christ Child within each of us unite with that same spark in someone else longing to be reborn. May we hold one another with tender care.

I have been blessed to be born on this day we celebrate Christmas in remembrance of the birth of Jesus, and my heart is filled with gratitude. My wish for all of you is that you continue to show your love for each other and all the wonders of creation we have been blessed to receive. May the bread we share be the sustenance needed to increase our faith and find the happiness that will mend our hearts. This is the time of Emmanuel—God with us! Life giving bread, in whatever form, will feed the world.

I offer my love and Christmas Blessings to you and to all those in need of rebirth—a rebirth that becomes possible with our every act of love. May it be so.

Holding these thoughts in the sacred space among us and strengthened by the support of one another, we now proclaim our affirmation of faith:

Affirmation of Faith

1. We believe that where people are gathered together in love, God is present and good things happen and life is full.

2. We believe that we are immersed in mystery, that our lives are more than they seem, that we belong to each other and to a universe of great creative energies, whose source and destiny is God.
3. We believe that through Mary's willing resolve, the Spirit of God beat in the heart of Jesus of Nazareth and God's good news was heard by the broken and wounded.
4. We are glad that the Spirit of Peace is present with us, the church, As we gather to celebrate our common existence and the fidelity of God.
5. And most deeply we believe that in our struggle to love, we incarnate God in the world.
6. And so aware of mystery and wonder, caught in friendship and laughter, we become speechless before the joy in our hearts as we celebrate the sacredness of life in this bread broken and cup poured out to be shared by all. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

For a deeper coming of Christ in our world that we experience through the birthing of God anew in our lives, let us offer our prayers:

We awaken to your call!

For whom and for what shall we pray?

Divine Creator of All, you dwell in every creature. We know you hear our prayers and continually pour out your mercy and grace. Through our prayers we are reminded we are always enveloped in your love and compassion. Strengthen our faith as you work through us to co-create your ever-expanding Kindom. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Sign of Peace

7. As we prepare this sacred meal, we reaffirm that just as Jesus was anointed, so is each of us. And so, we celebrate our Creator's fruitful love as we extend our blessing to one another with joy. May the peace that our brother, Jesus, offers, be always with us!

Offertory (All raise bread and cup)

We place on our plate the harvest to be won by labor's love. And into the cup we pour all the sap which is to be pressed out this day from Earth's fruits.

ALL: Holy Mystery, we offer this prayer in union with the whole church. We bless and are blessed by these elements: bread, fruit of the vine, gifts of Earth, the gift of ourselves, the gifts of the Cosmic Christ.

The Holy One is with us, abounding in Love!

1. We open our hearts in Christ, who lives and loves, heals and empowers through us, and give thanks to the Source of all Life.
2. Birther God, you brought forth all creation from your Life-Giving Womb. O Love of the Ages, who was born from Mary's womb, we praise you and leap for joy in your presence.
3. O Holy One of ancient Israel, you revealed yourself in a shining star, in humble shepherds, in a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes. You embrace us with infinite love in every situation and relationship. You dwell in the depths of our hearts.
4. We invite you this day to set us free, heal us, transform us and empower us as we gather around the table of your love. As we celebrate this sacred mystery in the embrace of the Holy One of Birthing, we proclaim your praise:

Holy Is This One by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan; Album: Our Roots Are in You © 2013 Worldmaking.net (Ascap)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wc13T8Gmuao> (no video – end at 2:34)

Refrain: Holy, holy, holy is this one
Holy, holy, holy is this one.

In the wilderness, on the mountain
Were you always? **R**

Here among us, come to love us,
Were you always? **R**

5. Praise to you, all-giving Mystery, born of Mary. You are the body and blood of woman. We glorify you, nurturing God, for the dawning of the sacred promise of God's Anointed, fulfilled in Jesus, the Christ.

ALL: May Sophia Spirit be recognized in the gifts of this Eucharistic Table, as we celebrate the +transformative power within this bread and fruit of the vine given to nurture afresh in us, the discerning gifts of wisdom, light and truth.

6. We celebrate the birth of Jesus, our newborn Emmanuel who came to give us fullness of life. During this holy season we share the bread of freedom and lift the cup of blessing. We invite all, especially those on the fringe of church and society, to join us around this banquet of love.

As Jesus gave birth to the New Covenant, he took bread, gave thanks, broke the bread, and shares it with us now saying:

ALL: *Take this all of you and eat it. This is my very Self given to you.*
(All raise bread)

At the end of the meal Jesus took the cup, blessed you, Birther of Life, and shares the cup with us now saying:

ALL: *Take and drink this cup of the new and everlasting covenant. It is poured out for you and for all, so that you might be free. Whenever you re-member me like this, I am among you.* **(All raise cup)**

Let us proclaim the sacred presence of our nurturing God:

ALL: Christ, by your life, ministry, and death, by your rising to new life within us, you have given birth to your new creation.

(All raise bread and cup)

ALL: For it is through learning to live as Jesus lived,
And why he lived,
And for whom he lived,
That we awaken to your Spirit within,
Moving us to worship you truly,
Life-giving God,
At this time, and all time, and in all ways.

Cantor: Amen! (x2)

Communion Rite

We pray as these gifts are shared among us. *Loving God:*

7. You call us to live the Gospel of peace and justice:
We will live justly.
1. You call us to be your presence in the world:
We will love tenderly.
2. You call us to speak truth to power:
We will walk with integrity in your abiding presence.

This is the Bread of Life and Cup of Blessing, through which we are nourished and we nourish one another.

ALL: In the sharing of this holy meal, may it be for us a sacred reminder of all that has been offered in this unfolding story as we give thanks for everything that gives us life, shapes and animates our bodies, our minds and our spirits.

All are invited to receive at our Tables of Friendship!

Communion Meditation: **Mary Did You Know?** (reworked lyrics by Jennifer Henry)
Vocalist – Eric Lige; Pianist – Vahagn Stepanyan; inspired by the popular song of the same name by Mark Lowry [lyrics] and Buddy Greene [music] Credits to official music: 1993 Curb Word Music

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WA0QdftF_Y (no video)

Mary did you know,
that your ancient words
would still leap off our pages?
Mary did you know,
that your spirit song
would echo through the ages?
Did you know that your holy cry
would be subversive word,
that the tyrants would be trembling
when they know your truth is
heard?

Mary did you know,
that your lullaby
would stir your own Child's
passion?
Mary did you know,
that your song inspires
the work of liberation?
Did you know that your Jubilee
is hope within the heart
of all who dream of justice,
who yearn for it to start?
*O Mary, Mary, did you know, did you
know?*

(bridge)

The truth will teach, the drum will sound, healing for the pain
The poor will rise, the rich will fall. Hope will live again!

Mary did you know,
that we hear your voice
for the healing of the nations?
Mary did you know,
your unsettling cry can help renew
creation?

Do you know, that we need your
faith, the confidence of you?
May the God that you believe in,
be so true, so true.

We pray together in the Name of Jesus:

- 3.** O Birther! Father- Mother of the Cosmos!
Focus your light within us – make it useful.
- 4.** Create your reign of unity now-
through our fiery hearts and willing hands
Help us love beyond our ideals
and sprout acts of compassion for all creatures.
- 5.** Animate the earth within us:
We then feel the Wisdom underneath supporting all.
Untangle the knots within
so that we can mend our hearts' simple ties to each other.
- 6.** Don't let surface things delude us,
But free us from what holds us back from our true purpose.

Out of you, the astonishing fire,
Returning light and sound to the cosmos. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Most tender God, open our hearts, as well as our eyes, to see your Light, the Wonder that you are, as you enter into our lives with your tender mercies and gentle love. Fill us with the wonder that is our life: its hope, its peace, its joy, its love. Amen.

Announcements

Blessing – *Everyone please extend your hands in mutual blessing:*

ALL: May our mothering God bring us to birth in every area of our living.
May Emmanuel, God-with-us, fill us with radiant joy!
May we be creators of hope in our families and in our world, and
May God bless us always with divine strength
to walk justly and serve generously all those we encounter.

And in so doing, we are blessed in the name of the Divine: Source of All Being, Eternal Word, and +Holy Spirit Sophia. Amen.

Let us birth our Eternal Christ-Word anew in our world today, as we go forth in faith to ponder in our hearts the mystery and the wonder of this Holy Season.

ALL: Thanks be to God!

Closing Song: **Ode to Joy** (Flash Mob), Beethoven Symphony No.9; Som Sabadell, Spanish plaza, de Sant Roc, July 6, 2012

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbJcQYVtZMo> (video)

and a child will lead them... Enjoy!

Joyful, joyful, we adore you, God of glory, God of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before you opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day!

All your works with joy surround you, Earth and heav'n reflect your rays,
Stars and angels sing around you, center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain, praising you eternally!

Mortals join the mighty chorus, which the morning stars began;
God's own love reigns within us, joining people hand in hand.
Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife,
Joyful music leads us sunward in the triumph song of life.

**Thank you for your courage to worship with us in the spirit of
equality and justice!**
**May the grace and mystery of this Christmastide enrich your lives and
lift your spirits anew!**

- * Transformation Rite was adapted from Joan Chittister's *O Antiphons: The Way We Think of Jesus*, published Dec. 16, 2024 in Vision and Viewpoint.
- ** Today's scripture readings are taken from the *Comprehensive Catholic Lectionary* made available through the Women's Ordination Conference.

An Inclusive Genealogy of Jesus

Compiled by Ann Patrick Ware; The Women's Liturgy Group of New York

A genealogy of Jesus, the son of Miriam, the daughter of Anna:

Sarah was the mother of Isaac,
And Rebekah was the mother of Jacob,
Leah was the mother of Judah,
Tamar was the mother of Perez.
The names of the mothers of Hezron, Ram, Amminadab,
Nahshon and Salmon have been lost.
Rahab was the mother of Boaz,
and Ruth was the mother of Obed.
Obed's wife, whose name is unknown, bore Jesse.
The wife of Jesse was the mother of David.
Bathsheba was the mother of Solomon,
Naamah, the Ammonite, was the mother of Rehoboam.
Maacah was the mother of Abijam and the grandmother of Asa.
Azubah was the mother of Jehoshaphat.
The name of Jehoram's mother is unknown.
Athaliah was the mother of Ahaziah,
Zibiah of Beersheba, the mother of Joash.
Jecoliah of Jerusalem bore Uzziah,
Jerusha bore Jotham; Ahaz's mother is unknown.
Abi was the mother of Hezekiah,
Hephzibah was the mother of Manasseh,
Meshullemeth was the mother of Amon,
Jedidah was the mother of Josiah.
Zebidah was the mother of Jehoiakim,
Nehushta was the mother of Jehoiachin,
Hamutal was the mother of Zedekiah.
Then the deportation to Babylon took place.
After the deportation to Babylon

the names of the mothers go unrecorded.

These are their sons:

Jechoniah, Shealtiel, Zerubbabel,

Abiud, Eliakim, Azor and Zadok,

Achim, Eliud, Eleazar,

Matthan, Jacob and Joseph, the husband of Miriam.

Of her was born Jesus who is called Christ.

The sum of generations is therefore: fourteen from Sarah to David's mother;

fourteen from Bathsheba to the Babylonian deportation;

and fourteen from the Babylonian deportation

to Miriam, the mother of Christ.

