

A Christmas service of thanksgiving and prayer for loved ones who have died

The Gathering

Welcome

'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they name him Emmanuel' which means, 'God is with us' Mathew 1:23

The Greeting

We meet in the name of Jesus Christ,
who died and was raised to the glory of God the Father.
Grace and mercy be with you.
And also with you.

We look not to the things that are seen
but to the things that are unseen;
for the things that are seen are transient
but the things that are unseen are eternal.
Today we come together
to remember before God our brothers and sisters who have died,
to give thanks for their lives
and to comfort one another in our grief.

Hymn

Once in royal David's city

Solo *Once in Royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed.
Where a mother laid her baby
In a manger for His bed.
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ that little child.*

All He came down to earth from Heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all.
And his shelter was a stable,
And his cradle was a stall.
With the poor and mean and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour Holy.

Not in that poor, lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see Him; but in Heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high,
When, like stars, His children crowned
All in white, shall wait around.

Luke 2:8-16

The Shepherds and the Angels

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Hymn

(Remain seated)

Silent night, holy night

Silent night, holy night,
all is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace.
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night,
shepherds quake at the sight,
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing alleluia;
Christ, the Saviour, is born!
Christ, the Saviour, is born!

Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at thy birth.
Jesus, Lord at thy birth.

Luke 2:25-35

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.”

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Homily



Poem

Rosemarie Poffley

I am standing on the seashore.
A ship sails and spreads her white sails to
the morning breeze and starts for the ocean.
She is an object of beauty
and I stand and watch her till at last
she fades on the horizon,
and someone at my side says, “She is gone.”

Gone where?
Gone from my sight, that is all;
she is just as large in the masts,
hull and spars as she was when I saw her,
and just as able to bear her load
of living freight to its destination.
The diminished size and total loss of sight
is in me, not in her.

And just at that moment when someone at my side says,
“She is gone”,
there are others who are watching her coming,
and other voices take up the glad shout,
“There she comes” *[Charles Henry Brent]*

Hymn

Hark! the herald angels sing

Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King,
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with th’ angelic host proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King!”

Christ, by highest heaven adored;
Christ, the everlasting Lord;
late in time behold him come,
offspring of a virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail th’ incarnate Deity,
pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King!”

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that man no more may die,
born to raise the sons of earth,
born to give us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King!”

Prayers

Act of Remembrance - Prayer Tree

Let us take a moment to light our candles and to remember those we love and have lost, and those we love who remain.

Father in heaven,
we thank you because you made us in your own image
and gave us gifts in body, mind and spirit.
We thank you now for those who have died
and what they meant to each of us.
As we honour their memory,
make us more aware that you are the one
from whom comes every perfect gift,
including the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Father of all,
we pray to you for those we love, but no longer see.
Grant them your peace;
let light perpetual shine upon them;
and in your loving wisdom and almighty power
work in them the good purpose of your perfect will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Lords Prayer

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done;
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
For ever and ever.
Amen.**

The Dismissal

The Peace

Jesus said: Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you.
Not as the world gives I give it unto you. Do not let your
hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

The peace of the risen Christ be always with you
and also with you.

Observing the Covid restrictions, let us share with one another a sign of God's peace

Conclusion

Lord by your presence,
Light up the past
That we might learn from it with thankfulness

Light up the present
That we might live in it with love

Light up the future
That we might prepare for it in hope.

O come, all ye faithful

O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him
Born the King of Angels:

*O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.*

God of God,
Light of Light,
Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Very God,
Begotten, not created:

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above!
Glory to God
In the highest:

Blessing

Lord our God, lead us in the way of truth and love, kindness and mercy. As we get ready for Christmas, may we learn more about loving you and loving one another. Give us the courage to keep asking the big questions about life and death, knowing that you are in our past, our present and all our future.

**You know us completely, and you love us completely.
Thank you, Lord God, for making us,
and for coming to be born among us as a baby.
May we worship you with our whole lives. AMEN**

The service is ended
Go in the peace of the Lord. **Amen**