

Christmas Message

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

THE WORD

Year A • 25 December 2022 • Psalter Week 1



ODE TO JOY

For any of us to lose our hearing is a tragedy. It cuts us off from much of life. But imagine being a supremely gifted composer, a musical maestro – and losing the one faculty you need most of all for your work.

It's akin to a Formula 1 driver losing their eyesight or a brain surgeon whose hands begin to shake. Such was the catastrophe that befell the great German composer Ludwig van Beethoven.

Beethoven's hearing deteriorated in his 20s while still honing his craft. He had to abandon his promising career as a concert pianist. Over the years, he tried every manner of medical intervention, to no avail. As a silent world slowly enfolded him, he grew increasingly frustrated, irritable, and withdrawn. Eventually, stone deaf, he had to rely on what he called his "mind's ear" when composing. Yet, despite this cruel twist of fate, this terrible life sentence, Beethoven was able to conjure music of exquisite beauty, transcendent harmonies that soared. He crafted compositions of unprecedented complexity and grandeur, sublime, immortal.

Though deaf, music remained for him a labour of joy. Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, his last symphony, first performed in 1824, ends with the *Ode to Joy*, a triumphant celebration of sisterhood and brotherhood that has become an anthem of European unity. It's a majestic choral masterpiece that does what it says on the tin – a hymn to joy unconfined, a fusion of heaven and earth. Imagine being able to write something so otherworldly when you're profoundly deaf.

For Christians, Christmas is the great season of our joy. We mark the birth two thousand years ago of Jesus, *Emmanuel*, God with us, who, in his life, his message, his dying and rising, made our salvation possible. His birth is joy to the world, as the angels sing, joy unconfined. We celebrate God's labour of love that gave birth to joy.

Joy is an experience our battered world badly needs after the turbulent year we have endured.

There are many for whom this is the most painful time of the year – a time of sadness, loneliness, grief, loss.

We cry out for respite from drudgery and war, price rises and pandemics. Joy is something we need to experience and celebrate, and Christmas is the season of joy.

Pope Francis loves the word "joy". It's sprinkled throughout his preaching and writing. It's in the titles of his letters and encyclicals – the joy of the Gospel, the joy of love, rejoice and be glad. It's no surprise he loves that word because joy is the hallmark of our Christian faith.

Joy is the essence of this feast. The joy in knowing God is with us; the joy in knowing God has not forgotten us; the joy of families united, the joy of love shared. Christmas is an ode to joy. ■

REFLECT

So remember today what brings our Christmas joy. Jesus' humble birth has prepared a way for us to draw near to him. In our brokenness, our poverty, our weakness, our need, God comes to us. God's presence is healing, life-giving and renewing. We shout for joy, for we have been saved.

Feel that joy today. Let it seep into every molecule of your being. Let it envelop you. Invite it in, especially if you have lacked its fullness this year. Inhale it. Nurture it. Treasure it.

Share that joy. Gift it. It's something precious, priceless. Reach out to those you know who have found this year difficult, those who find this time of year difficult, those who are laid low by illness, financial worries, or separation or loss. By your words and actions, lift them. Carry them. Carry each other.

These festive days will pass. Post-Christmas blues will sweep in. We're all susceptible to them. But when normality returns, choose to continue to take refuge in God and rejoice. Because of Jesus' arrival two thousand years ago, we can now experience the joy of God's presence forever. Joy unconfined.

A joy of which Beethoven's immortal music is but a tiny little foretaste. ■

PRAY

Ask the Lord to fill you with joy at his coming.

LEARN

Christmas tells us that God hasn't forgotten us. God has come among us, as one like us, to show us the way, to show us how to live, to offer us hope.

Love is the best Christmas present we could give or hope to receive.

DO

Jesus is *Emmanuel*, "God-with-us". Make a conscious effort to be aware of God's presence in our world today and every day.

SAY

"O come, O come, Emmanuel."

MASS DURING THE NIGHT**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

The Lord said to me: You are my Son.
It is I who have begotten you this day.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who have made this most sacred night
radiant with the splendour of the true light,
grant, we pray, that we, who have known the
mysteries of his light on earth,
may also delight in his gladness in heaven...
Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 9:1-7

PSALM

Psalm 95

Response:

Today a saviour has been born to us:
he is Christ the Lord.

SECOND READING

Titus 2:11-14

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
I bring you news of great joy:
today a saviour has been born to us, Christ
the Lord.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Luke 2:1-14

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(all kneel during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,

and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the oblation of this day's feast
be pleasing to you, O Lord, we pray,
that through this most holy exchange
we may be found in the likeness of Christ,
in whom our nature is united to you...
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The Word became flesh, and we have seen
his glory.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God,
that we, who are gladdened by participation
in the feast of our Redeemer's Nativity,
may through an honourable way of life
become worthy of union with him...
Amen.

MASS AT DAWN**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Today a light will shine upon us, for the Lord
is born for us;
and he will be called Wondrous God,
Prince of peace, Father of future ages:
and his reign will be without end.

COLLECT

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that, as we are bathed in the new radiance of
your incarnate Word,
the light of faith, which illumines our minds,
may also shine through in our deeds...
Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 62:11-12

PSALM

Psalm 96

Response:

This day new light will shine upon the earth:
the Lord is born for us.

SECOND READING

Titus 3:4-7

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace to men who enjoy his favour.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Luke 2:15-20

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May our offerings be worthy, we pray, O Lord,
of the mysteries of the Nativity this day,
that, just as Christ was born a man and also
shone forth as God,

so these earthly gifts may confer on us what
is divine...
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Rejoice, O Daughter Sion; lift up praise,
Daughter Jerusalem;
Behold, your King will come, the Holy One
and Saviour of the world.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant us, Lord, as we honour with joyful
devotion
the Nativity of your Son,
that we may come to know with fullness of
faith
the hidden depths of this mystery
and to love them ever more and more...
Amen.

MASS DURING THE DAY**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

A child is born for us, and a son is given to us;
his sceptre of power rests upon his shoulder,
and his name will be called Messenger of
great counsel.

COLLECT

O God, who wonderfully created the dignity
of human nature
and still more wonderfully restored it,
grant, we pray,
that we may share in the divinity of Christ,
who humbled himself to share in our
humanity...
Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 52:7-10

PSALM

Psalm 97

Response:

All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.

SECOND READING

Hebrews 1:1-6

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
A hallowed day has dawned upon us.
Come, you nations, worship the Lord,
for today a great light has shone down upon
the earth.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 1:1-18

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Make acceptable, O Lord, our oblation on this
solemn day,
when you manifested the reconciliation
that makes us wholly pleasing in your sight
and inaugurated for us the fullness of divine
worship...
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

All the ends of the earth have seen the
salvation of our God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant, O merciful God,
that, just as the Saviour of the world, born
this day,
is the author of divine generation for us,
so he may be the giver even of immortality...
Amen.