

The Grace of God Appeared



Leader : God, open my eyes.

Response: That I may see Jesus, born of Mary.

Leader: God, open my lips.

Response: That I may sing praise to the wonders our God has done!

Leader: Glory to you, Source of all being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit.

Response: As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.



Leader: Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

All: And we have seen his glory! Glory to God in the highest heaven!

Leader:

In Luke's Gospel today, when we read it, we hear that God is anything but vague and comforting. God enters into history fully human in Jesus born of Mary. In Luke's Gospel, God incarnate has eyes, ears, mouth, feet and hands. The life and love of God walks and talks, laughs and cries, lives and dies. God's life takes shape in time and history. Luke has God in a womb, on a cross, rocked in a manger, welcomed by shepherds, eating and drinking with tax-collectors, prostitutes and sinners! Certainly God is not vague nor comforting! Can we and do we allow ourselves to believe this, the Mystery of this Incarnation of God!

Response

All; Our God has appeared on earth and lived among us! Forever I will sing the goodness of our God! The Word became flesh and pitched his tent among us. Alleluia!

Action: The infant Jesus is placed in the chapel crib.



Reading: A reading from Zephaniah 3:14-18

Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you and turned away your enemies. The king of Israel is in your midst; you shall not fear disaster any more.

Do not fear O Zion! Do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord God is in your midst; a warrior who gives victory; He will rejoice over you with gladness; he will renew you in his love.

The Word of God.

All: Thanks be to God



Reflection

God so loved the world that in time and history he sent his only-begotten Son. We could easily change these words to say that God so loved you and me that he sent his Son, Jesus, to be like us in all things but sin. Can we imagine our God being so happy? Can we imagine our God holding us up in the air absolutely delighted and dancing for joy just because of who we are?

As God delights in his Son Jesus, so God delights in us his creation, holding us always in the palm of his hand and dancing madly for joy. Today, our earth is joined with heaven in the birth of Jesus. And so, we too are joined to heaven. We become children of God!

“Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy!” St. John of the Cross once said: *“The person who loves God swims in joy, always keeps holiday, and is always in the mood for singing.”*

Do we have hearts that sing at Christmas or is it just another day in the yearly calendar? Do we rejoice that our God, so mysterious and so transcendent is so very near to us? Do we allow our hearts to dance with joy because God loved us so much that he sent us Jesus ?

Let us take a moment to allow God's word to penetrate our hearts, minds, souls and bodies!

Silence (Play a verse or two of the hymn "And the Father Will Dance")

Response Psalm 12 (in choir)

Response: Shout aloud and sing for joy; great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel!

1. Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might. R.
2. Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted. R.
3. Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth.
4. Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel. R.
5. Glory to you, Source of all Being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end, Amen. R.

Intercessions: For what and for whom should we pray for this holy night.

Sacred Action

In a gesture of Reconciliation, Friendship and Brotherhood, you are now invited to move into a circle around the crèche and place your right hand on the shoulder of the person on your right and your left hand on the person on your left. Together, as we greet Jesus the Christ, let us pray together the prayer that he taught us:

Our Father



Concluding Prayer

All: God , Creator of all, Transcendent and Imminent One,

You loved us so much that you sent Jesus to us as our brother. We know, Lord, that we are most like him as Brother when we take time to share your presence in our lives. May we create always this sacred space wherein we share our experiences of you who dwells always within us.

May we, as Brothers, learn to empty ourselves and risk opening our hearts to make room for you to come in. Demolish, O God, the protective covers, the shells, the walls that prevent our true selves from being revealed.

May we, O gracious and abundant God, allow our hearts to be exposed and vulnerable so that we will always make manifest your Son, Jesus Christ in our words and actions. May we constantly be opened to the great mystery of Emmanuel, God with us, Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary. Amen.



Hymn: Joy To The World

Joy to the world, the Lord has come,

Let earth receive her king,

Let everyone heart prepare him room

And heaven and nature sing; and heaven and nature sing;

And heaven and heaven and nature sing.



Live Jesus in our hearts! Forever

