
The First Sunday of Christmas: Morning Prayer: 27 December 2020

The Lord be with you.

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, raise you up to walk with him in the newness of his risen life.

Let us confess our sins to God our Father.

Heavenly Father, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour in thought and word and deed, through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault;

by what we have done and by what we have failed to do.

We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ who died for us, forgive us all that is past; and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. *Amen*

Absolution Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy on you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Philippians 2:1-11 [Imitating Christ's Humility]

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.
This is the word of the Lord;
Thanks be to God.

Luke 2:41-52 [The Boy Jesus in the Temple]

Now every year the parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

In the Acts of the Apostles and in Paul's letters, there are several references to the early Christians singing hymns. The hymn in today's Letter of Paul to the Christians in Philippi is a good example. After an introductory statement of encouragement, the passage speaks of Christ's life and death in terms of the obedience and humility characteristic of slaves. But the second stanza of the hymn speaks of his resurrection in terms of the status and deference accorded a master: - "At the name of Jesus every knee should bend". We sometimes sing it as a morning canticle. It is a useful reminder to me of the duality of the Christ - at once an obedient servant and a king.

But we ought to step right back now to the earliest time when the boy Jesus is mentioned in Luke's Gospel. Without this small vignette we face a 30-year hiatus until the life in the desert of the fore-runner - John the Baptist - awaiting the time of Jesus' ministry. Read simply as a story, the account of today's gospel extract

shows Luke's artistry: the loss of a child at the festival; the resulting wrench at the heart of his parents; the frantic search; the distancing speech of the adolescent, and the parents' incomprehension of a mandate that was obvious to the young man.

To me, the kernel verse is what Jesus said to his parents: "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" – with the implication that "it is necessary". Perhaps better still, translated as "to be involved in my Father's affairs". Clearly, Luke, in this passage has Jesus take up some part of the task God has ordained for him.

The incomprehension of his parents serves a literary function: "ignorance" plays an important role in Luke: Luke shows the reader how even the most faithful of the people seem not to understand the intent and the vocation of Jesus. "Did you not know – did you not know that Jesus had to be involved in his Father's affairs. To many of us, that is what you might call a down-to-earth grounding of the divine connection of the Father and the Son – perhaps an easier introduction to the much-more-daunting thesis of the Incarnation. It reminds me of other almost out-of-body experiences later in the gospel, such as the simple, awesome post-resurrection appearance of Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. For now, in today's gospel reading we have an intriguing insight into the supernatural heart of Jesus' mission: to be the Son of God. Close to us. Close by us. Here with us.

Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord.

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried;

he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again;

he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church,

the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. **Amen.**

The Collect of the first Sunday of Christmas

Almighty God, who wonderfully created us in your own image

and yet more wonderfully restored us through your Son Jesus Christ:

Grant that, as he came to share in our humanity,

so we may share in the life of his divinity;

who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. one God, now and forever.

Prayers of intercession

Bless the worship of the Church, that it may be filled with reverence for his holy birth. Teach your faithful people to treasure the message of salvation and to ponder it in their hearts.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Give peace to the world, peace between nations and races, peace where people are in dispute. May the love of the Holy Family of Bethlehem draw all into the way that leads to eternal life.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer

Grant us the light of faith given to the shepherds, that we may make known the wonder of the Nativity. As we rejoice at this time with our families and friends, make us truly grateful for the wonderful gift of the Holy Child. We pray for peace in our communities here in Ringsend, Irishtown, Sandymount and Donnybrook; for peace in our relationships; that your peace may spread throughout the world.
Lord, in your mercy'.

Have mercy on all who are sad, or lonely, or injured or in hospital at this time; those who are sick and suffering with COVID-19. We remember before you all whose lives are falling apart, all who are entering into darkness, that each in their weakness may know your strength. We pray that you will support those who are caring for them, and we ask that you will cherish our hospital chaplains at this time. *Lord, in your mercy,*

We pray for those who in this world gave thanks for the birth of their Lord and have passed through death to be born to eternal life in him. May our worship this day be joined with theirs. *Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

The Lord's Prayer

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 Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us bless the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that by the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope;

And the blessing ...