

PREFACE FOR CHRISTMAS

tibi semper, et ubique grátias agere: Dómine sancte, Pater omnipotens, ætérne Deus: Quia per incarnáti Verbi mystérium, nova mentis nostræ óculis lux tuæ claritátis infúlsit: ut dum visibíliter Deum cognóscimus, per hunc in invisibílium amórem rapíamur. Et ídeo cum Angelis et Arch-ángelis, cum Thronis et Domínationibus, cumque omni milítia cæléstis exércitus, hymnum glóriæ tuæ cánimus sine fine dicéntes:

that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto Thee, O holy Lord, Father almighty and everlasting God. Because by the mystery of the Word made flesh the light of Thy glory hath shone anew upon the eyes of our mind: that while we acknowledge Him to be God seen by men, we may be drawn by Him to the love of things unseen. And therefore with angels and archangels, with thrones and dominions, and with all the heavenly hosts, we sing a hymn to Thy glory, saying without ceasing:

PROPER COMMUNICANTES FOR CHRISTMAS

COMMUNICANTES et diem noctem sacratíssimam celebrántes, qua beátæ Mariæ intemeráta virginitas huic mundo édídít Salvatórem: sed et memóriam venerántes, in primis ejusdem gloriósæ semper Virginis Mariæ, Genitrícis ejúsdem Dei et Dómini nostri Jesu Christi: sed et...

IN communion with, and keeping that most holy night, in which the spotless virginity of the blessed Mary brought forth a Saviour to this world, venerating also in the first place the memory of the same glorious ever Virgin Mary, Mother of the same Jesus Christ, our Lord and God: also of...

COMMUNION: PS. 109. 3

In splendóribus sanctórum, ex útero ante lucíferum génui te.

In the brightness of the saints, from the womb before the day star I begot Thee.

POSTCOMMUNION

Da nobis, qásumus, Dómine Deus noster: ut, qui Nativitátem Dómini nostri Jesu Christi mystériis nos frequentáre gaudémus; dignis conversatió nibus ad ejus mereámur perveníre consórtium. Qui tecum vivit.

Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord our God, that we who rejoice in celebrating these mysteries of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, may by a fitting conversation become worthy to attain to fellowship with Him. Who with Thee liveth.

COMMENTARY ON THE MASS AT MIDNIGHT

STATION AT ST. MARY MAJOR AT THE ALTAR OF THE CRIB

The Word, begotten from all eternity by the Father, has raised into personal union with Himself the blessed Fruit of the virginal womb of Mary; in other words the human and divine natures are joined in our Lord in the unity of a single Person—the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Further, since when we speak of a son we mean a person, Jesus must be called the Son of God, because as the Son of God He is a Divine Person. He is the Incarnate Word. From this it follows, that our Lady is called the Mother of God; not that she has begotten the Word, but because from her is derived the humanity that the Word has united to Himself in the mystery of the Incarnation. We can understand, then, why the Church directs us to sing at the Midnight Mass the solemn Introit wherein our heavenly Father says in effect, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee.” The eternal Son of the Father is begotten for ever in eternity, Christ is now begotten of the Father on the day of His birth in our humanity.

The Gospel does not say at what exact time Jesus was born, but only that it was during the night. The Roman Missal does not contain a “Midnight Mass” *media nocte*, but a “Night Mass” *in nocte*, which, however, was not celebrated before midnight.

This Night Mass originated in the 5th century (about a hundred years after the Day Mass that was then celebrated at St Peter’s), in the Basilica of St. Mary Major, whither in the 7th century some relics of the crib were brought, and kept in an underground chapel in commemoration of the grotto of Bethlehem.

This birth at dead of night is symbolic. Christ, who is “God of God, Light of Light,” (*Credo*), disperses the darkness of sin. He is “the true light” whose brightness “hath shone anew upon the eyes of our mind: so that while we acknowledge Him as God seen by men, we may be drawn by Him to the love of things unseen” (*Preface*). He came to snatch us from ungodliness and worldly desires and to teach us to merit by the holiness of our lives here below the blessed hope which is promised to us. That will be the fullness of light, the coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (*Epistle and Postcommunion*).

Christmas means the appearance, when the world was dark, of the divine Light; shining in us and around us it will reach to infinity, to the very end of time.

Commentary From St. Andrew Daily Missal, 1952 ed.



The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.