

CHRISTMAS DAY (1st / Midnight)

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Station at St. Mary Major - at the Crib.

The feast of Christmas was from the first a feast of the Apostolic See. The fixation of the date resulted from the separation by the Roman Church of the celebration of Our Savior's birth from that of His other great manifestation now placed on the Epiphany. The characteristic feature of the feast of Christmas in the Roman rite is the custom of the three Masses, one at the first cock-crowing, the next at dawn, the third in broad daylight. St. Gregory bears witness to the custom, but it is certainly older than his time, for the biographer of Pope Telesphorus, in the *Liber Pontificalis*, claims that it was this latter Pontiff who first introduced the singing of the *Gloria* into the midnight Mass at Christmas.

The Mass at midnight recalls the circumstance that Christ was born in Bethlehem at midnight. The midnight Mass commemorates the eternal birth of the Word of God amid the magnificence of His Father's glory; the Mass at dawn celebrates His appearance in time in the humility of the flesh, and lastly, the third Mass, at St. Peter's, symbolizes His final coming on the day of judgment, to judge both the living and the dead.

In order to reproduce in liturgical form at Rome, as at Jerusalem, the scene of the Savior's birth, Pope Sixtus III (432-40) had erected in St. Mary Major a sumptuous oratory at the crib, and one which was considered by the Romans to be a copy of the original at Bethlehem. At the foot of the crib we say to the Christ Child in the words of St. Alphonsus -

"Ah, how much it has cost Thee to love us!"

INTROIT Psalms 2: 7

Dóminus dixit ad me: Fílius meus es tu, ego hódie génuí te. (Ps. 2: 1) Quare fremuerunt gentes: et pópuli meditáti sunt inánia? Glória Patri et Fílio et Spíritui Sancto, sicut erat in princípío, et nunc, et semper, et in sæcula sæculórum. Amen. Dóminus dixit ad me: Fílius meus es tu, ego hódie génuí te.

COLLECT

Deus, qui hanc sacratíssimam noctem veri lúminis fecísti illustratióne claréscere: da, quæsumus; ut, cujus lucis mystéria in terra cognóvimus, ejus quoque gáudiis in cælo perfruámur: Qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitáte Spíritus Sancti, Deus, per ómnia sæcula sæculórum.

EPISTLE Titus 2: 11-15

Caríssime: Appáruit grátia Dei Salvatóris nostri ómnibus homínibus, erúdiens nos, ut abnegántes impietátem et sæculária desidéria, sóbrie, et juste, et pie vivámus in hoc sæculo, exspectántes beátam spem et advéntum glóriæ magni Dei et Salvatóris nostri Jesu Christi: qui dedit semetípsum pro nobis: ut nos redímeret ab omni iniquitáte, et mundáret sibi pópulum acceptábilem, sectatórem bonórum óperum. Hæc lóquere, et exhortáre: in Christo Jesu, Dómino nostro.

GRADUAL Psalms 109: 3, 1

Tecum princípium in die virtútis tuæ: in splendóribus sanctorum, ex útero ante luciferum génuí te. Dixit Dóminus Dómino meo: Sede a dextris meis: donec ponam inimicos tuos, scabéllum pedum tuórum.

LESSER ALLELUIA Psalms 2: 7

Allelúja, allelúja. Dóminus dixit ad me: Fílius meus es tu, ego hódie génuí te. Allelúja.

GOSPEL Luke 2: 1-14

In illo témpore: Éxit dictum a Cæsare Augústo, ut describerétur univérsum orbis. Haec descriptio prima facta est a præside Sýriæ Cyríno: et ibant omnes ut profiteréntur singuli in suam civitátem. Ascéndit autem et Joseph a Galilæa de civitáte Názaresh, in Judæam in civitátem David, quæ vocátur Béthlehem: eo quod esset de domo et familia David, ut profiterétur cum María desponsáta sibi uxóre prægnánte. Factum est autem, cum esset ibi, impléti sunt dies ut páreret. Et péperit fílium suum primogénitum, et pannis eum involvit, et reclinávit eum in præsepío: quia non erat eis locus in diversório. Et pastóres erant in regióne eádem vigilántes, et custodiéntes vigilias noctis super gregem suum. Et ecce Ángelus Dómini stetit juxta illos, et cláritas Dei circumfúlsit illos, et timuérunt timóre magno. Et dixit illis Ángelus: Nolíte timére: ecce enim, evangelizo vobis gáudium magnum, quod erit omni pópulo: quia natus est vobis hódie Salvátor, qui est Christus Dóminus, in civitáte David. Et hoc vobis signum: Inveniétis infántem pannis involútum, et pósitum in præsepío. Et súbito facta est cum Ángelo multitúdo militiæ cælestis, laudántium Deum, et dicéntium: Glória in altíssimis Deo, et in terra pax homínibus bonæ voluntátis.

OFFERTORY Psalms 95: 11, 13

Læténtur cæli et exsúltet terra ante faciém Dómini: quóniam venit.

SECRET

Accépta tibi sit, Dómine, quæsumus, hodiérnæ festivitátis oblátio: ut, tua grátia largiénte, per hæc sacrosáncta commércia, in illius inveniámur forma, in quo tecum est nostra substántia: Qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitáte Spíritus Sancti, Deus, per ómnia sæcula sæculórum.

PREFACE OF THE NATIVITY

Vere dignum et justum est, æquum et salutáre, nos tibi semper, et ubique grátias ágere: 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 rapiámur. Et ídeo cum Ángelis et Archángelis, cum Thronis et Dominatióibus, tumque omni militía cælestis exércitus, hymnum glóriæ tuæ cánimus, sine fine dicéntes:

COMMUNICANTES FOR CHRISTMAS

Communicántes, et noctem sacratíssimam celebrántes, quo beátæ Mariæ intemeráta virgínitas huic mundo édidit Salvatórem: sed et memóriam venerántes, in primis ejusdem gloriósæ semper Vírginis Mariæ, Genetrícis ejúsdem Dei et Dómini nostri Jesu Christi: sed et beáti Joseph, ejúsdem Vírginis Sponsi, et beatórum Apostolórum ac Mártyrum tuórum, Petri et Pauli, Andréæ, Jacóbi, Jóannis, Thomæ, Jacóbi, Philíppi, Bartholomæi, Matthæi, Simónis et Thaddæi: Lini, Cleti, Cleméntis, Xysti, Cornélii, Cypriáni, Lauréntii, Chrysógoni, Jóannis et Pauli, Cosmæ et Damiáni: et ómnium Sanctorum tuórum; quorum méritis, precibúsque concédas, ut in ómnibus protectiões tuæ muniámur auxilió. Per eúndem Christum Dóminum nostrum. Amen.

COMMUNION Psalms 109: 3

In splendóribus sanctorum, ex útero ante luciferum génuí te.

POSTCOMMUNION

Da nobis, quæsumus, Dómine Deus noster: ut, qui Nativitátem Dómini nostri Jesu Christi mystériis nos frequentáre gaudémus; dignis conversatióibus ad eum mereámur pervenire consórtium: Qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitáte Spíritus Sancti, Deus, per ómnia sæcula sæculórum.

The Lord hath said to me: Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. (Ps. 2: 1) Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things? Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. The Lord hath said to me: Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.

O God, who hast made this most holy night to shine forth with the brightness of the true Light: grant, we beseech Thee, that we, who have known the mystery of His light on earth, may attain the enjoyment of His happiness in heaven. Who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

Dearly beloved: The grace of God our Savior hath appeared to all men, instructing us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly and justly and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ: Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works. These things speak and exhort: in Christ Jesus our Lord.

With Thee is the principality in the day of Thy strength: in the brightness of the Saints, from the womb before the day star I begot Thee. The Lord said to my Lord: Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool.

Alleluia, alleluia. The Lord hath said to Me: Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. Alleluia.

At that time there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem: because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child. And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger: because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds watching and keeping the night watches over their flock. And behold an Angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the Angel said to them: Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad before the face of the Lord: because He cometh.

May the oblation of this day's festival be pleasing to Thee, we beseech Thee, O Lord: that of Thy bountiful grace, we may, through this sacred intercourse, be found conformed to Him, in Whom our substance is united to Thee. Who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

It is truly meet and just, right and for our salvation, that we should at all times and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, O holy Lord, Father almighty, everlasting God: for through the Mystery of the Word made flesh, the new light of Thy glory hath shone upon the eyes of our mind, so that while we acknowledge God in visible form, we may through Him be drawn to the love of things invisible. And therefore with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominations, and with all the hosts of the heavenly army, we sing the hymn of Thy glory, evermore saying:

Communicating, and keeping this most holy night, in which the spotless virginity of blessed Mary brought forth a Savior to this world; and also reverencing the memory of the same glorious Mary, ever Virgin Mother of the same our God and Lord Jesus Christ: as also of blessed Joseph, her Spouse, and of Thy blessed Apostles and Martyrs, Peter and Paul, Andrew, James, John, Thomas, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon and Thaddeus; Linus, Cletus, Clement, Sixtus, Cornelius, Cyprian, Lawrence, Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmas and Damian, and of all Thy Saints, through whose merits and prayers great that we may in all things be defended by the help of Thy protection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

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 association be made worthy to attain to fellowship with Him. Who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.