

**Unofficial English Translation of Parts of the
Midnight Mass – St. Peter’s Basilica – 24 December 2007**

**The Solemnity of the Lord’s Birth
2007
Midnight Mass
Celebrated by the Holy Father
Benedict XVI
In St. Peter’s Basilica**

*Pages 5 – 10 of the original Mass booklet (www.pccs.it/tj/telecasts.htm) consist of
Scripture readings in various languages to be read while the congregation gathered in
St. Peter’s Basilica awaits the start of the celebration with the Entrance Procession at
midnight Rome time, when the broadcast also begins.*

PREPARATION FOR THE CELEBRATION (*liturgical background from the “libretto”*)

Following an ancient tradition which goes back to the very beginnings of the Church in Rome, Christians celebrate the mystery of Christmas in the heart of the night. They recall the silence which enveloped all things, when God’s Word came down from heaven and radiant light shone around the shepherds as they listened with joy to the news of the Saviour’s birth.

On this sacred night, in the presence of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, we too are gathered to celebrate the mystery of the Lord’s nativity: the mystery of the light that shines in the darkness, the Word made flesh, the bread come down from heaven.

In faith we join our fellow Christians throughout the world for the celebration of this great event of our salvation. In a special way, we are united with our brothers and sisters in Africa, Asia, North and South America, and Eastern and Western Europe, who take part in this Mass by radio and television.

Before the celebration of Midnight Mass, we are invited to mediate prayerfully on the prophecies that announced the promised Messiah, the prayers that invoked his coming, and the cosmic silence that surrounded his birth.

At the beginning of Mass, before we echo the song of the angels on that holy night, “Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth”, the Lord’s birth in the fullness of time will be solemnly proclaimed in the words of the ancient “Kalenda”. This majestic text presents Christ, the Redeemer of mankind, as the centre of the cosmos and of all history.

INTRODUCTORY RITE

La schola:

"You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church"

Entrance Antiphon:

"The Lord said to me: 'You are my son; this day I have begotten you' "

Holy Father:

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

R. Amen.

Holy Father:

Peace be with you.

R. And also with you.

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Holy Father:

On this Christmas Eve
we celebrate the mystery of the birth of Jesus Christ
by the Virgin Mary of Bethlehem.
The Son of God became man,
so that humanity, saved from sin,
might become through faith adopted children of God.

The birth of Jesus
already marks the beginning of
man’s reconciliation and communion with God
who will fulfil himself through the passover of death and resurrection.
The birth of Jesus to an earthly life
already marks our own rebirth to eternal life.

The Eucharist echoes and fulfils
the Good News of salvation,
and the Christian rediscovers God as Father
and men as brothers.

Reading of Kalends

The cantor proclaims the historical birth of the Saviour:

The octave of the Kalends of January, the 16th moon
(the equivalent of December 25)

December 25 The 16th Moon
Many centuries having passed from
when God had created the world
and had made man in His own image,

and many centuries after
the flood had ended
and the Most High had displayed the rainbow,
sign of covenant and peace;

twenty-one centuries
after the birth of Abraham, our father;

thirteen centuries
after the exodus of Israel from Egypt
under the guidance of Moses;

approximately one thousand years
after the anointing of David as king of Israel;

in the “sixty-fifth week”,
according to the prophecy of Daniel;

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about the time of the one-hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad;

in the year seven-hundred and fifty-two
of the foundation of Rome;

in the forty-second year
of the empire of Octavius Augustus,

while peace reigned in the land,
in the sixth age of the world,
Jesus Christ, eternal God and Son of the eternal Father,
desiring to sanctify the world with his coming,
nine months having passed from the time of his conception
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
was born in Bethlehem of Judea,
of the Virgin Mary, and was made man;

The birth of our Lord Jesus Christ
in his human nature.

Gloria

The Holy Father leads the singing of the Gloria in excelsis Deo, followed by the Sistine Chapel Choir and the congregation, as a hymn of glory to God for the birth of the Saviour. A figure of the baby Jesus is placed in front of the main Altar of the Confession while a group of young children from various continents brings a floral homage. The bells ring as a sign of celebration.

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.
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.

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Opening Prayer

Father,
you make this holy night radiant
with the splendour of Jesus Christ our light.
We welcome him as Lord, the true light of the world.
Bring us to eternal joy in the kingdom of heaven,
where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

R. Amen.

First Reading

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (Is 9:1-6)

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom
a light has shone.

You have brought them abundant joy
and great rejoicing,
as they rejoice before you as at the harvest,
as people make merry when dividing spoils.

For the yoke that burdened them,
the pole on their shoulder,
and the rod of their taskmaster
you have smashed, as on the day of Midian.
For every boot that tramped in battle,
every cloak rolled in blood,
will be burned as fuel for flames.

For a child is born to us, a son is given us;
upon his shoulder dominion rests.
They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,
Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.

His dominion is vast
and forever peaceful,
from David’s throne, and over his kingdom,
which he confirms and sustains
by judgment and justice,
both now and forever.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!

The word of the Lord.

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Responsorial Psalm (Ps 96: 1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13)

R. (Lk 2:11) Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all you lands.
Sing to the LORD; bless his name.

R. Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

Announce his salvation, day after day.
Tell his glory among the nations;
among all peoples, his wondrous deeds.

R. Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice;
let the sea and what fills it resound;
let the plains be joyful and all that is in them!
Then shall all the trees of the forest exult.

R. Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

They shall exult before the LORD, for he comes;
for he comes to rule the earth.
He shall rule the world with justice
and the peoples with his constancy.

R. Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

The grace of God has appeared to all.

Second Reading

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to Titus (Ti 2:11-14)

The grace of God has appeared, offering salvation to all men.
It trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires,
and live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age,
as we await our blessed hope,
the appearing of the glory of the great God
and of our Savior Christ Jesus.
It was he who sacrificed himself for us, to redeem us
from all unrighteousness and to cleanse for himself a people of his own,
eager to do what is right.

The word of the Lord.

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Alleluia, alleluia.

I proclaim to you good news of great joy:
today a Savior is born for us,
Christ the Lord.
Alleluia, alleluia.

Today a Savior has been born for you.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke (Lk 2:1-14)

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus
that the whole world should be enrolled.
This was the first enrollment,
when Quirinius was governor of Syria.
So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town.

And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth
to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem,
because he was of the house and family of David,
to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

While they were there,
the time came for her to have her child,
and she gave birth to her firstborn son.
She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger,
because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields
and keeping the night watch over their flock.
The angel of the Lord appeared to them
and the glory of the Lord shone around them,
and they were struck with great fear.
The angel said to them,
“Do not be afraid;
for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy
that will be for all the people.
For today in the city of David
a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord.
And this will be a sign for you:
you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes
and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel,
praising God and saying:

“Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

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The Holy Father gives his homily.

Crede

In the profession of faith, all kneel at the words “and became man”.

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:

by the power of the Holy Spirit
he was born of the Virgin Mary, *and became man*.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered, died, and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in fulfillment of 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.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

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Prayer of the Faithful

Holy Father:

The Son of the Virgin Mary,
born in Bethlehem,
is Emanuel, God with us.
Rejoicing with faith
in this most holy night
we come together with those who believe
and hope in salvation through the Lord.

Cantor: We pray to the Lord. R. Lord, have mercy.

French:

For the Church,
that throughout the world it may reawaken hope with the news that with the mystery of the Lord’s
birth, He is close to every person.

Arabic:

For the entire world,
that the peace which Jesus brought with his birth may be realized in every place with the
contribution of individuals and communities.

German:

For the victims of violence, those who are persecuted, the marginalised and the oppressed,
that in them may be recognized and honoured the image of the Son of God made man.

Chinese:

For those seeking God and truth,
that they may receive from all of us – through our words and efforts – the news that today the
Saviour is born.

Portuguese:

For all of us gathered here,
that we may welcome and live the grace of Christmas with faith that Christ, who came to live
among us, is with us always all of our days.

Holy Father:

Lord Jesus, you come to share
in our struggles and in our hopes,
instil in the heart of every person the certainty
that eternal life is:
to know the Father who sent you
and to welcome you as our Saviour.
You who live and reign for ever and ever.

R. Amen.

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LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

A group of children from various continents bring the gifts to the Holy Father during the offertory procession.

Prayer Over the Gifts

Lord,
Accept our gifts on this joyful feast of our salvation.
By our communion with God made man,
may we become more like him
who joins our lives to yours,
for he is Lord for ever and ever.

R. Amen.

... Eucharistic Prayer I (Roman Canon) ...

Prayer After Communion

God our Father,
we rejoice in the birth of our Savior.
May we share his life completely
by living as he had taught.
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

R. Amen

CONCLUDING RITE

Holy Father:

May God who in the birth of Christ your Son flooded this night with your holy light,
send away the darkness of evil and enlighten us with the light of your goodness.
Amen.

May God who sent the angels to give the shepherds the good news of Christ’s birth,
make you messengers of his Gospel.
Amen.

May God who in His Son made man joined the earth to heaven,
fill us with his peace and his love.
Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
descend upon you and remain with you forever.
Amen.

...

The Holy Father goes to venerate the Christ child in the Basilica’s nativity scene.