

Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Metcalfe
CHRISTMASTIDE
DECEMBER 24, 2023
Reverend Michael Fleming

Fr. Michael: As we get closer to Bethlehem where the Light of the world waits to greet us, we acknowledge that the sacred space in which we celebrate our life in the light lies on the unceded territory of the Algonguin Anishinaabe peoples.

People: **Together, may we walk the path of light and peace in a true spirit of reconciliation and hope.**

Fr. Michael: As we approach the rude cave of birth for all of us, three times we hear, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord: prepare ye the way of the Lord."

Fr. Michael: Scripture tells us that Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour." We are also told that, on the night of nights, the angels of the Lord announced, "Do not be afraid – behold we bring you tidings of great joy which shall be for all peoples. Today in the city of David is born a Saviour who is Christ the Lord". For the wonders you have done among us Lord, we shout your name and sing your praise day by day. Our souls magnify you for your promises of joy and new hope.

People: **O God, we sing your praises now and forever!**

Fr. Michael: God of the ages, like Mary, may our souls reflect the greatness and our spirits rejoice in you, for you have looked with favour on us and have done marvellous things.

Fr. Michael: May our lives be a response to the love you have shown us in Jesus. (THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE IS LIT)

Fr. Michael: We shall sing to the Lord a new song! We will remember the Lord's salvation every day and we shall sing of God's peace on earth at all times!

People: **Sing a new song to the Lord!**

Fr. Michael: We declare the Lord's marvellous works to all the world. We rejoice in the coming of the Lord into our lives, into our history and celebrate the fulfillment of all the promises our Creator has made!

People: **Sing a new song to the Lord!**

Fr. Michael: Loving God, we give thanks for the birth of joy in our lives this Christmas-tide. Send us forth as messengers of the Great Good News of great joy for all peoples around the globe. We ask this in the name of the One born this day to be our Hope, our Joy, our Peace and our Love-Jesus. (THE FIFTH CANDLE IS LIT)

All: **Amen**

Fr. Michael: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: The prophet Isaiah said, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them as Light shined.

People: **O come, O come Emmanuel.**

Fr. Michael: The prophet Zechariah said before the birth of John the Baptizer, "By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us to give light to those who live in darkness, to guide our feet into the ways of peace." People: **O come, O come Emmanuel.**

Fr. Michael: The Evangelist John wrote, "What has come into being through him was life and that life is the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it."

People: **O come, O come Emmanuel.**

Fr. Michael: God is with us! God is coming into our lives in a new way. The birth of Jesus the Christ-child is the renewal of our hope, a reminder that he will come again. So let us keep watch for the light; it is drawing near.

People: **O come, O come Emmanuel.**

Fr. Michael: Eternal God, this time is radiant with the brilliance of your one true light. As we have known the revelation of that light on earth bring us to see the splendour of your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God now and forever.

All: **Amen**

Fr. Michael: Glory to God in the highest and hope to every discouraged heart! Glory to God in the highest and peace to every conflicted soul! Glory to God in the highest and joy to every downcast spirit! Glory to God in the highest and love to everyone. Let us sing our praises to our God this day and always.

All: **Alleluia!**

Fr. Michael: And now with all the saints in heaven and those gathered together on this good earth, together we acclaim,

People: **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.**

Reader: A reading from the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 9:2-3, 6-9) The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. The Lord has sent a message against Jacob; it will fall on Israel. All the people will know it— Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria — who say with pride and arrogance of heart,
The Word of the Lord

People: **Thanks be to God**

Reader: Lord God, Father of Jesus the Christ, be present at these our Christmas celebrations which honour the birth of your Son and make them fine and full. Make our greetings to one another sincere and our giving real; enliven our relationships both within our families and beyond them in the spirit of the Christ Child.

All: **Amen** (from Worpelsdon Parish England)

Reader: A Christmas Litany: Welcome the Light

In a little town known for nothing much, God's holy child was born. By the faint light of the moon, Joseph and Mary made their way.

People: **Welcome the Light: oh come, let us sing to the Lord!**

Reader: Shown by a courtyard fire the open stable door; warm breath of sleeping beasts with kindness sparkling in their eyes.

People: **Welcome the light: oh come, let us sing to the Lord!**

Reader: In a shadowy stable stall, Joseph kindled a lamp and there Mary gave birth to Jesus called Emmanuel, God-With-Us.

People: **Welcome the light; oh come, let us sing to the Lord!**

Reader: Angels opened the doors of heaven and sang, "Glory to God in the highest". Shepherds saw the sky ablaze and left their sheep and came to see.

People: **Welcome the Light: oh come, let us sing to the Lord!**

Reader: In the darkest night God set a brilliant star and on this Christmas night with joy, we greet the Child.

People: **Welcome the Light; oh come, let us sing to the Lord! Alleluia!**

(Jennifer Phillips, St. Augustine's Episcopal Church. Kingston Rhode Island adapted by RMF)

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: The Holy Gospel of our Lord and Saviour according to the Blessed St Luke (St. Luke 2:1-20)

People: **Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Fr. Michael: In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Fr. Michael: This is the very Gospel of Christ.

People: **Thanks to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Homily

Fr. Michael: At this time of rejoicing and revelation, this time of renewed hope and love, we affirm our faith as we say,

All: I believe in one God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He 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, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. 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.

Reader: We come to adore you, little one. On bended knees, with hope-filled hearts and eyes stretched out wide with wonder and awe, we come to you. The gentleness of your gaze draws us into the mystery of all that lies beyond and in that place of falling into joy, we yield all that we are and all that we have to you.

People: **Come Lord Jesus, live in us as we live in you.**

Reader: We pray for those who are broken; those who seek love and hope in the darkness of their world; for those with trembling and rumbling tummies because they have not eaten; for those with haggard spirits and ragged loves because they have no place to rest their heads; for those who cling to the last best thing they remember and to those whose hearts pine for love.

People: **Come Lord Jesus, live in us as we live in you.**

Reader: Bless us, O Lord, who adore you and turn our faces and hearts ever towards you. For peace, for joy, for hope, for love, for mercy and for all that is holy,

People: **Come Lord Jesus, live in us as we live in you.**

Reader: The Holy Family wandered the streets of Bethlehem in search of shelter and love. Remembering the innkeeper who showed compassion and care for them, we pray for all organizations and institutions which serve those on the margins – the lost, the lonely, those without shelter, those who seem worthless in the eyes of those who have more than enough, those who hunger and thirst. We remember the work of your Church as it reaches out hands and hearts of care and love, praying especially for our diocese and for Shane, our Bishop; Anne, our Metropolitan; Linda, our Primate; as well as Christ Church Cathedral, Ottawa and The Very Reverend Beth Bretzlaff, The Reverend Canon Douglas Richards, and Deacon Jarrett Carty. We also pray for our parish family here at Holy Trinity: Liesa, Marjorie, Beth, Randy, Howard, Irene, Richard, Deb, Leonard, Louise, Jeanette, Cheryl, Zachariah and those who are known to you alone. May we continue to seek and to serve those who cry out, “Lord, where are you?”

People: **Come Lord Jesus, live in us as we live in you.**

Reader: Gathering this day to celebrate the birth of Emmanuel, God Among Us, we rededicate ourselves – hearts, souls and hands - to the work of your Kingdom, not only speaking the Gospel but living it in our everyday lives. We do this in Jesus’ name and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

All: **Amen**

Fr. Michael: O God, you search us out and you know us, and all that we are is open to you. We confess that we have sinned.

People: **In your mercy Lord forgive us and heal us.**

Fr. Michael: When we make no room for the Christ and fail to make him welcome in our lives,

People: **In your mercy Lord, forgive us and heal us.**

Fr. Michael: When we follow shooting stars and squander our gifts in the courts of the world,

People: **In your mercy Lord, forgive us and heal us.**

Fr. Michael: When we seek to cut down those who might rise above us,

People: **In your mercy Lord, forgive us and heal us.**

Fr. Michael: When we sanitize your birthplace and erase the memory of the poor and the displaced who gathered before you and when we sing sweet sentiments over Christ's birth and fail to rejoice over his everyday presence in the lives of those around us,

People: **In your mercy Lord, forgive us and heal us.**

Fr. Michael: Hear the Good News: the darkness will not overwhelm us and the night is as brilliantly bright as the day; the God who has promised to never leave us nor to abandon us has healed our brokenness and healed our wounds. So arise and shine for your light has come and the glory of the Lord is all around you in the power of the Blessed Trinity: Father, Son and Spirit.

All: **Amen**

Fr. Michael: And the peace of the Lord of the Stable and of the Dance be always with you.

People: **and also with you.**

Fr. Michael: Source of light and goodness, accept all that we offer at this joy-filled feast. May we grow up in him who unites our lives to yours, for he is Lord now and forever.

All: **Amen.**

Fr. Michael: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them to the Lord.**

Fr. Michael: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Fr. Michael: Holy God, Lover of creation, we give you thanks and praise for in the ocean of your steadfast love you bear us and place the song of your Spirit in our hearts. When we turn from your love and defile the earth, you do not abandon us. Your Spirit speaks through Huldah and Micah, through prophets, sages, and saints in every age, to confront our sin and reveal the vision of your new creation. Joining in the song of the universe we proclaim your glory saying

All: **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Fr. Michael: Gracious God, in the fullness of time you sent Jesus the Christ to share our fragile humanity. Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection you open the path from brokenness to health, from fear to trust, from pride and conceit to reverence for you. Rejected by a world that could not bear the Gospel of life, Jesus knew death was near. His head anointed for burial by an unknown woman, Jesus gathered together those who loved him. He took bread, gave thanks to you, broke it and gave it to his friends, saying, "Take and eat: this is my body which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me." After supper, Jesus took the cup of wine, gave you thanks, and said "Drink this all of you, this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me." And now we gather at this table in response to his

commandment, to share the bread and cup of Christ's undying love, and to proclaim our faith.

All: **Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.**

Fr. Michael: Breathe your Holy Spirit, the wisdom of the universe, upon these gifts that we bring to you: this bread, this cup, ourselves, our souls and bodies, that we may be signs of your love for all the world and ministers of your transforming purpose. Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory is yours, Creator of all, and we bless your holy name for ever.

All: **Amen.**

Fr. Michael: At this blessed time, we join our hearts and voices with fellow Christians throughout the world who pray in a multitude of languages but the same Spirit-heartbeat,

People: **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.**

Fr. Michael: We break the bread of life and that life is the light of the world.

People: **God here among us, light in the midst of us, bring us to light and life.**

Fr. Michael: The gifts of God for all the children of God.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

WE SHARE THE GIFTS OF THE BREAD AND WINE OF NEW LIFE WITH ONE ANOTHER

Fr. Michael: Father of all, the Child born to us at this time is the Saviour of the world. May he who made us your children welcome us into your kingdom, where he is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit now and forever.

All: **Amen**

All: **Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the Church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Fr. Michael: This Christmas, I wish for you LIGHT to crumple up the darkness. This Christmas I wish for you LOVE to pull us closer to one another. This Christmas, I wish you PEACE the same as that which the angels sang. This Christmas I wish for you STARLIGHT to follow you on your way home and every day of your lives. This Christmas I wish for you PROMISE to keep hope alive within you. This Christmas I wish for you the joy of knowing GOD newly born and in the flesh. This Christmas I wish for you JESUS CHRIST born at this time, Light of the world and Hope for the nations.

All: **Alleluia!**

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