



*Homily – Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord
(Christmas) 2011 (B)ⁱ
Mass at Midnight*

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Archbishop of Los Angeles*

*Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels
Los Angeles, California
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Merry Christmas, my brothers and sisters!

This is a most sacred night! Because this is Christmas, and today we remember that day long ago, when God fulfilled the prophecy that we heard in the first reading of this holy Mass.

For us, a Child is born and a Son is given. This Child will inherit the throne of King David. He comes as a Prince of Peace and his kingdom will last forever.

So we rejoice tonight! Once we were a people walking in darkness, the darkness of sin and ignorance that makes it hard to find God and to love him. But now a great light has shone in the darkness — to show us the way to the holy Child, to God.

Today, for us, a Child is born! A Son who is destined to change history, and destined to change each one of our lives.

We all know the beautiful Christmas story we have just heard in our Gospel reading for today's Mass. We know that when the time came for Mary to have her child, she wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And today, my brothers and sisters, we have to ask: Is there still room for Jesus Christ in our world? Is there still room for him in our hearts? Can we still believe in his salvation? Can we still believe in the peace he comes to bring to us and to our world?

In our Gospel reading tonight, we heard the beautiful song of the heavenly host, the *Gloria*, and God's promise to bring peace on earth.

So we pray tonight for peace in our world, especially in the lands where Jesus Christ and his Church were born. We pray for all children, especially those living in poverty and trouble. We pray also for those who still have not seen the light of this Child, those who are living as if God does not exist.

Our readings from sacred Scripture on this holy night tell us that the birth of Jesus is both a sacred mystery and the most important event in human history, the history of salvation.

In our second reading, St. Paul tells us:

The grace of God has appeared ... the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ ...to deliver us ... and to cleanse for himself a people as his own.

My brothers and sisters, *we* are the people whom God has come to redeem and to make his own! *We* are God's children, his sons and daughters! Our Catholic Church is God's family, *the family of God* created by his Son, the first-born of many brethren!

This Child born of the Virgin Mary is *God himself*. And that is the beautiful gift of Christmas — God's gift of himself.

This Christmas, once again, the Child in the manger at Bethlehem is calling to each one of us *by name*. Let's not refuse him! Let's not turn him away from our door.

The Child who calls to us is the Son of God. This Child is our brother. And this Christmas, he is calling each one of us to truly live as he did, as a child of God. He is calling us to follow him and to imitate him, to be like him.

Because Jesus came down from heaven to share our human life, we know that all our daily activities are filled with divine meaning. We don't worship God only inside the church. We can worship him in everything we do in our daily lives — in our work and our relationships, in our participation in society and public life.

God created each one of us to play a part in his plan of salvation. Tonight, on Christmas, we need to make a new commitment to live the way he wants us to live, to be instruments of God's joy and peace in our world!

Our Father's will is that his Kingdom come — on *earth as it is in heaven*. Just as Jesus comes down from heaven on Christmas, to fill the earth with his justice and his holiness.

So let us work to bring Christ's Kingdom of charity and truth to our great Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Let's make this a city where it is easier to be good, where it is easier to love and to be loved. Let's make room for God — in every human heart in the whole world! Let's begin tonight, on Christmas!

And let's pray tonight to Holy Mary, the Mother of God, and to her husband, St. Joseph who still guides and protects the family of God. Let us pray to be worthy of the promises of Christ, who is the gift of God that we receive today, on Christmas.

ⁱ Readings (Mass at Midnight): Isa. 9:1–6; Ps. 96:1–3, 11–13; Titus 2:11–14; Luke 2:1–14.