

Christmas Mass During the Night 2025 – Year A

Isaiah 62:1-5; Ps 88; Acts 13:16-17; Matt 1: 1-12

*For Sion's sake I will not keep silent,
And for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet¹*

Tonight on this most holy of nights, the Sacrifice of the Mass starts to take shape. Tonight, after the Holy Spirit has descended upon the bread and the wine and at the Consecration and transformed it into Body and Blood of Christ, we will see the Body of Jesus, we will receive Him. He who is our life will humble Himself and condescend to rest in the palm of my hands and then on your own. It is the Body of the Glorified and Resurrected Jesus. It is also the Body of the baby Jesus. It is the same Jesus who was born in a manger and lay at his mother's breast so many years ago, This is the night (day) of humble Sacrifice when God gives his only Son into the world in secret and silence. The angels will speak; the shepherds will come; the wise men too, but for the most part the world sleeps, just as it does now. God has chosen to become a human child among men and women, so easy to overlook, like the Host that I will hold.

And what of it? What does it mean? God loves us? Yes, God loves us. But what of this love? The world is full of this word 'love' and yet it so often seems to be in violent distress as if it does not know what the meaning of it, or cannot find it. Maybe we do not look in the right place.

Although our worship is Spirit filled, you can touch it, for one simple reason: The Son of God has entered into the world to be with us and to be one like us in all things but sin. He became touchable. No, he is not on your screen, put them down. He is not on a card or even in a carol. He is not there afterwards at the heavily laden dinner table, when the roast beef and wine lay heavy in the belly, pleasing though this is. He is in the manger.

Have you ever carried a baby? Babies have a weight and a solidness about them that makes them unmistakably real. Imagine that you are there with Mary and Joseph, and Jesus. You look at Mary and she nods to your silent request. Unbelievably gently she places the baby Jesus - the Son of God - in your arms. Feel the weight of love. It is the offering of Peace. It is a peace offering between the world and heaven. It will lead to Easter and mercy, which lies over the horizon.

At the end of the Eucharistic Prayer the priest raises the Consecrated Body and Blood, and offers them to the God the Father. It is a sign of the Son, offering Himself up to God the Father, not just as a sign but in reality. It is the child in small signs.

Then we pray the Lord's prayer, which is a prayer of peace. To enter into this prayer, to pray as the Son prays to the Father, we can unite ourselves in their peace. The child is looking deep into your eyes. Is it joy, mirth, love, what?

¹ Isaiah 62:1-5

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We are near the summit of our worship. But just before we receive the gifts of Christ, the priest says the words that Jesus spoke to his Apostles, '*Peace I leave you, my peace I give you...*' He does not say 'I give you my love', he says he give you his 'peace.' 'Peace' is how love is made real. It is not a stoppage in violence, like a fragile cease fire in Gaza. It is not a moment of contained anger between an ever-quarrelling couple. It is not avoiding conflict by doing nothing. 'Peace' is yielding to Christ.

And so, when the priest says '*The peace of the Lord be with you always*', you are invited to offer each other the '*sign of the peace.*' Heaven and earth touch. You greet your neighbour. This is a moment of great solemnity when you are to say to whoever might be next to you, '*Peace be with you.*' This is a moment when you, too, can receive and give the Holy Child.

On this night (day) we celebrate the birth of the Jesus, whom God sent into the world as a peace offering. On this great day of light and joy we are asked to receive peace. On this great day of thanksgiving and song and praise we give peace a name. This is the song of the heavens and the earth. This is Christ Jesus.

We place him back in the arms of his Holy Mother, in awe. We have held salvation in our hands. We will guard him with our life, in all our days to come, like his parents and the Holy Apostles, like all the saints and martyrs. We will not keep silent, we will rejoice. May His peace be with you.