# The Nativity of Our Lord December 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020 **e-Worship**



Lutheran Church of Our Saviour

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA 8401 W. Hillsborough Ave, Tampa, FL 33615 www.LcosTampa.org www.facebook.com/lcostampa phone: 813-884-1232 e-mail: lcoschurchoffice@gmail.com A very merry Christmas to all who come to worship the Christ Child. Our liturgy this evening is the special Eucharist from which comes the word Christmas. It is the Christ Mass, the incarnation of our Lord and Savior: in a manger in Bethlehem, in the Word of proclamation, in the sacrament of Holy Communion, and in our hearts as we take him into the world. Ancient chants and ancient scripture combine with candles, carols, and bright array to tell the story of the Christ Child's birth in the quiet of this special night. In the intimacy of the hour, we meditate by the manger, and in awe adore him as the infant God and King.

"Your little ones, dear Lord, are we, and come your lowly bed to see; Enlighten ev'ry soul and mind, that we the way to you may find. With songs we hasten you to greet, and kiss the ground before your feet. Oh, blessed hour, oh, sweetest night that gave you birth, our soul's delight". ELW 286 Merry Christmas Joyeux Noël Feliz Navidad Frohe Weihnachten

Your Pastor, The Rev. José Luis La Torre Cuadros.

# Gathering

#### #283 O Come, All Ye Faithful

 O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!
 O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem; come and behold him, born the king of angels:

#### Refrain

- O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!
- 2 The highest, most holy, light of light eternal, born of a virgin, a mortal he comes; Son of the Father now in flesh appearing! *Refrain*
- 3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!



Glory to God in the highest: *Refrain* 

Text: attr. John Francis Wade, 1711-1786; tr. Frederick Oakeley, 1802-1880, sts. 1, 3-4; tr. unknown, st. 2

#### INVITATORY

P Blessed be the Holy One of Israel,
the Word made flesh, the Power of the Most High,
+ one God, now and forever.
Amen.

**P.** Today, Jesus Christ, eternal God and Son of the eternal Father, desiring to sanctify the world by his most merciful coming, being conceived by the Holy Spirit was born in Bethlehem of Judea of the Virgin Mary. Today is the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh.

C. Gracious God, in Christ Jesus you come among us as light shining in darkness. We confess our failure to welcome your light. Forgive us and renew our hope, so that we may live in the light of your grace, and welcome the truth of Christ the Lord.

P. I bring you good news of great joy for all the people: To you is born a Savior, Christ the Lord.Your sins are forgiven in + Jesus' name.

C. Amen.

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

- P. Let us pray. Almighty God,
- C. you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### Word

#### FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 9:2-7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness-- on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

A. Word of God, Word of Life

#### C Thanks be to God

#### Psalm 96

<sup>1</sup>Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, | all the earth. <sup>2</sup>Sing to the Lord, bless the name | of the Lord; proclaim God's salvation from | day to day. <sup>3</sup>Declare God's glory a- | mong the nations and God's wonders a- | mong all peoples. <sup>4</sup>For great is the Lord and greatly | to be praised, more to be feared | than all gods. <sup>5</sup>As for all the gods of the nations, they | are but idols; but you, O Lord, have | made the heavens. <sup>6</sup>Majesty and magnificence are | in your presence; power and splendor are in your | sanctuary. <sup>7</sup>Ascribe to the Lord, you families | of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord hon- | or and power. <sup>8</sup>Ascribe to the Lord the honor due the | holy name; bring offerings and enter the courts | of the Lord. <sup>9</sup>Worship the Lord in the beau- | ty of holiness; tremble before the Lord, | all the earth. <sup>10</sup>Tell it out among the nations: "The | Lord is king! The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will

#### judge the peo- |ples with equity."

<sup>11</sup>Let the heavens rejoice, and let the | earth be glad;

let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that | is therein.

<sup>12</sup>Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your com- | ing, O Lord,

#### for you come to | judge the earth.

<sup>13</sup>You will judge the | world with righteousness and the peoples | with your truth

#### SECOND LESSON: Titus 2:11-14

<sup>11</sup>The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, <sup>12</sup>training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, <sup>13</sup>while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup>He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

A. Word of God, Word of Life

#### C. Thanks be to God

#### HYMN #270 "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

 Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king; peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled." Joyful, all you nations, rise; join the triumph of the skies; with angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

#### Refrain

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

2 Christ, by highest heav'n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord, late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb. Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!



Hail, incarnate deity! Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel! *Refrain* 

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of peace!
Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
ris'n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise each child of earth,
born to give us second birth. *Refrain*

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788, alt.

#### GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 2:1-14

- P. The Holy Gospel according the St. Luke.
- C. Glory to you, O Lord.
- P. In those days a decree went out from the Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

P. The Gospel of the Lord

#### C. Praise to you, O Christ.

#### SERMON

Rev. José Luis La Torre Cuadros

Dear disciples: Grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus. Amen.

#### Merry Christmas!

The Lord is here, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the promises of God have been fulfilled. Our Savior is here!

Titus sums it up: "God has appeared" to train us to "renounce impiety and worldly passions" and "to live lives that are self-controlled" (2:11-12). Christmas Eve calls us to shift our sights, reset our patterns, remember what joy this mysterious, miraculous, renewing vision brings—a world in which God's mercy offers to everyone the feeling of awe every day.<sup>1</sup>

I read a Christmas story the other day, and like many Christmas stories, the title is "A Christmas Miracle," and focuses on the importance of giving. In this tale, a young girl, Rose, dreams of a Christmas morning filled with extravagant gifts. It's a dream that has no chance of coming true, because her family is poor. Ultimately, though, Rose's family's act of kindness to a stranger produces a Christmas miracle. In the story Rose searched the sky. She needed to find a shooting star. Christmas was only three days away, and she had to make a wish. After breakfast, she helped her mother wash dishes. "Mama," she said. "If you could have anything for Christmas, anything at all, what would you wish for?" Mama smiled and set the clean plates in the cupboard. "I already have everything I could want -- you, your brothers and sisters, and your father, all in good health."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Sundays and Seasons 2021.

"I know, but I mean something extra," Rose said, as she squeezed out the dish towel. "Something wrapped in a box that you could open on Christmas morning. What would it be?"

"Well, it would be a mighty funny-looking box," said Mama. "But if I could have something extra, I'd wish for a Christmas tree, tall and full, with so many decorations you could hardly see the branches. And a big, plump turkey I could roast with dressing and potatoes." She leaned against the cupboard and smiled. "And when it was done, we would sit down at the table next to our Christmas tree, and eat the finest Christmas dinner any of us has ever tasted." She closed her eyes. "I can almost taste it now."

"And a new dress?" asked Rose. "Would you like a new dress?"

"Yes," Mama nodded. "A new dress."

Surprisingly that Christmas Eve, a stranger stood on the step. His eyelids sagged with weariness. The stranger's voice quivered. "Could you shelter a hungry traveler from the cold?" "Of course," they said and opened the door for the stranger. "You're just in time for dinner. We don't have much, but you are welcome to share what we have." "Bless you," said the stranger. "Merry Christmas."

Before Rose closed her eyes, she took one more look out the window. A bright yellow star shot across the sky, leaving a sparkling trail behind it. "Oh!" she cried. Rose stared at the shooting star.

"Please let my family have a wonderful Christmas," she whispered, "and let Mama have a Christmas tree."

Dawn peeked over the mountain. Rose opened her eyes. It was Christmas! She would surprise her parents and the traveling stranger by making the coffee before anyone else awoke.

She tiptoed toward the fire. Everybody was sleeping, and the stranger was gone! On the floor where he had slept lay a bulging gunnysack remains. "Mama! Papa!" Rose shouted. "Look." Her parents rushed over, they all stared at the sack.

"It's filled with presents," Papa said. He pulled out a box and read the tag. "This one's for you, and this one's for Mama."

Mama lifted a green lace dress from her box, and Papa opened a shiny, new pipe. Rose watched in silence. She was happy for her family. Still, the sack was empty, and there was no gift for her. She ran to the window to hide her tears. "Oh!" she cried. "Look!"

Outside stood a fir tree, full and tall, with beautiful hand-carved decorations. Rose ran out the door. On the tree was a note that said: "To Rose. Merry Christmas." "It's a miracle!" she shouted. "My wish came true. Merry Christmas!"<sup>2</sup>

What is wonderful in this Christmas Story is that Rose, the main character, is happy only when she sees that the dreamed Christmas tree for her mother was there. Her present was not for her, it was for her mother, but for Rose the real present was that someone she loved received a beautiful present.

The story teaches us to find joy and happiness bringing joy and happiness to others and wishing others to see their dreams realized. This is exactly what the spirit of Christmas is. God's joy and happiness is to contemplate our dreams and our joy realized.

That is what the apostle writes to Titus: <sup>11</sup>The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all. The grace is this surprising act of mercy that appeared mysteriously as the stranger in our Christmas Story and disappeared leaving us a sack full of presents making our dreams real.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> <u>https://people.howstuffworks.com/culture-traditions/holidays-christmas/christmas-stories-a-christmas-miracle.htm</u> "A Christmas Miracle" BY LISA HARKRADER

This evening we celebrate that <sup>11</sup>The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all. To all, not just to some, but to all, because the gift of Jesus is a universal gift that comes to bless everybody, but we need to trust, we need to have faith in the miracle of God. We need to recognize God in the presence of the stranger, in the visit of the needy, in the conversation with the pilgrim. We all are pilgrims, we all need to gather and pray for each other, we need to recognize Christ presence in each other and welcome that presence to celebrate together that <sup>11</sup>The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all.

The gift of God that we receive in Jesus Christ redeems us and creates in us a passion to share the gift with others. The gift of God this evening appeared wrapped in bands of cloth and laid in a manger in Bethlehem. The gift comes to enliven us, enrich us, transform us and bless us with abundant joy and gratitude.

God comes to our world to open to us the doors of a new future expressed in new meanings and new opportunities to be better. For that reason, the letter to Titus after proclaiming our salvation states that the goal of this salvation is at the present time: <sup>12</sup>training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly.

Christmas is not only carols, lights and decorated trees, Christmas is the opportunity to decorate also our life, illuminate our heart and sing a song of permanent joy in gratitude for the gift of Jesus Christ.

Every year we decorate our homes to remember this holy night, we sing the Christmas songs, we light our Christmas tree, we share a Christmas dinner, but the most important decoration, enlightening and transformation should not stay only for the twelve days of Christmas but should be a permanent experience of a renovated and transformed heart that is now the manger for baby Jesus. Yes, it is our heart the manger, it is our life that needs to be decorated with the Christmas spirit permanently, and it is our life the inn where the son of God wants to come and incarnate daily to bring God news to the people. We are invited to think beyond ourselves and imagine that the shepherds and the wisemen are coming looking for the son of God in a manger. But the manger is your heart now, and the son of God wants that you open your heart to your neighbor, to your family, to your parents, siblings, children, and everybody, because all are invited to contemplate the mystery that is now incarnated and present in the hearts of all the ones that are proclaiming that Jesus was born to bring salvation to all.

But you can think that this is too difficult. It is very difficult to try to live in a way that Christ can be present and visible in us 24/7. I know it is hard and I know it is difficult, but we are not alone. We have the presence of the Holy Spirit, we have the community of faith: the church, which supports us and helps us. We have our family, we have the Bible, we have the possibility to pray, we have the opportunity to serve, we have from God many doors that are always open to explore new and better ways to live our Christian faith in very meaningful ways.

Yes, this will be always a work in progress but the life of discipleship, the baptismal life is always a work in progress. It is always God making us new every morning and forgiving us every evening. Yes, our Christian life is always a work in progress – and this is exactly what Christmas is too. It is the work of God that began in a manger, but continues to develop in a ministry that has a Good Friday followed by an Easter morning, and that now is inspiring us and helping us to remember that the great adventure, the great journey began in a manger, in a small town with a baby where the mystery of God was revealed in simplicity, vulnerability and amazing love to the simple, the humble, the poor,

the needy and the brokenhearted. The same God that incarnated in the child of Bethlehem is now incarnating in your heart as a great transformative presence that wants you to experience the same awe and wonder that two thousand years ago the common people of Judah experienced.

It is Christmas time, and this is the night that reminds us that life begins small and simple, and salvation is like that: small, simple but growing, developing, expanding and transforming. It is a gift for all. It is for you and for the whole world.

This holy night your heart is the manger for Jesus, and Jesus wants to bless you and help you to be his witness the rest of your life. Enjoy the journey with the child of Bethlehem.

Merry Christmas.

Amen.

#### HYMN # 296 What Child Is This

- What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?
  Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping?
  This, this is Christ the king, whom shepherds guard and angels sing; haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!
- 2 Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?Good Christian, fear; for sinners here



the silent Word is pleading. Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you; hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mary!

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come, peasant, king, to own him. The King of kings salvation brings; let loving hearts enthrone him. Raise, raise the song on high, the virgin sings her lullaby; joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mary!

Text: William C. Dix, 1837-1898

#### PRAYERS

A. Gathered with all who seek the Christ child, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need. *A brief silence*.

The shepherds sing, "Jesus Christ is born!" Let your church throughout the world proclaim this good news, over the hills and everywhere. Unite the voices of all your faithful people in songs of praise and rejoicing. Heaven and nature sing, "Joy to the world!" Give respite to flocks, fields, and

those who tend them. Come near to us in the beauty of nighttime, the shining of the stars, and the hush of a world at rest. May our wonder at your creation rouse our care for all the earth.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.** 

The angels sing, "Peace on earth!" Come quickly to still the strife of this world. Hush the noise of war and violence in places of unrest (especially). Inspire leaders of nations to seek lasting peace and sustainable provision for all in their care.

Mary sings melodies of comfort to her newborn child. Bring rest and reassurance to those facing struggles this night. Shelter travelers and those without homes. Console those who lie awake due to pain or anxiety. Heal those who are sick or hurting (especially). Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.** 

Love sings through the sound of a new baby's cry. Bless new parents and expectant parents. Comfort those who long for children, especially those running out of hope or options. Surround families of every shape and size with your love and care.

The heavenly chorus sings, "Glory to God in the highest!" We give you thanks for all the saints who have proclaimed your glory in word and deed (especially). Let us join them this night in joyful praise around your eternal throne (especially).

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.** 

Into your gracious hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your steadfast mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.** 

P. Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

C. 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, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

### Sending

DISTRIBUTION OF THE LIGHT Light your Christmas Candle at home.

LESSONS OF LIGHT: A. "And God said, Let there be light."

P. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear.""Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path.""For the commandment is a lamp; and the teaching is a light."

A. "The sun shall no longer be your light by day; nor for brightness shall the moon give light unto you by night: but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory."

P. "You are the light of the world."

"You are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness."

"For you were sometimes darkness, but now you are light in the Lord: walk as children of light."

- A. "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.
- P. "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."
- A. "And we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth."

#### SONG OF SIMEON

C. Lord, now let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled. My own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people: a light to lighten the nations and the glory of your people Israel. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen St. Luke 2:29-32



- 1. Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright. Round yon virgin mother and child. Holy Infant, so tender and mild, Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.
- 2. Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight; Glories stream from heaven afar, Heav'nly hosts sing, Alleluia! Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!
- 3. Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light Radiant beams from your holy face, With the dawn of redeeming grace, Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

#### BLESSING

**P.** May the Joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary, and the peace of the Christ child be yours this Christmas; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, + be among you and remain with you always.

#### C. Amen.

All extinguish their candles.

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And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.



May the special joy of that first Christmas be with you always.

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