

Church of the Good Shepherd
and
St. John the Evangelist

Christmas Night 10:00pm
December 24, 2006

“On Christmas Night...”

Welcome to our Christmas Midnight service in honor of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. We gather to begin our festive celebrations with this Eucharist and we dedicate our service this year to the people of the parish.

And as we gather to remember those who have passed in the last 12 months, particularly Lillian, Franklyn, Paul, Grace, Ruth and Richard.

Among the foremost of our prayers this year is that of peace on earth. As in many past years we need peace in so many places around the world. For all of us, who think of Christ as the bringer of peace, we know that this year our thoughts and prayers are with our military in Iraq and Afghanistan. We pray for soldiers on duty this Christmas who are separated from wives, children, and sweethearts. We pray for airmen and women and air crews patrolling skies in the Middle East and over our major cities. We pray for Navy personnel in the Gulf of Persia, the Korean Sea and protecting our coastlands.

Irrespective of political persuasion or opinion we pray for all who have laid down their lives in the service of this nation in the last 12 months. In this service we ask God's grace on our Nation and we ask his protection from all acts of terrorism or national disaster.

The readings for today's service are the most beautiful of the year from Isaiah telling us: “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.”

Constantly in the Christmas readings comes the word ‘grace.’ It is God's grace which comes to us in incarnation. It comes as a free gift to give us hope in the blank darkness of our lives. The story that Luke tells in the Gospel leaves us in no doubt that Christ is divine; he is pure gift to our world. Accompanied by angels the shepherds witness this special event.

Here 2,000 years later we celebrate God taking human form and coming among us. As we do so we are so aware that his coming will end with death and the cross. Jesus' death is not just his destiny it is the most necessary part of the Jesus story. In dying Christ shares with each of us that step that each of us must take. His death takes away the terror and replaces it with hope.

In that sense the stable and the baby in the manger is a symbol of hope for each one of us. We see in the serenity of this scene meaning for our lives. It is our Christian hope that the Magi of Christmas and its spirit will live on.

The Rev. William J. McGinty, Rector
110 West Catharine Street, Milford, Pennsylvania 18337
Phone: (570) 296-8123 ♦ Fax: (570) 296-4383

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This year our prayer, blessing and best wishes go out to all the families in the parish. We pray in a special way for families who have children far from home at this time. We ask God's help and protection on them this Christmas.

Amen+

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