FESTAL EUCHARIST
CHRISTMAS EVE
11.30pm Oxford Time

Christ Church Cathedral
OXFORD
Welcome to this first Eucharist of Christmas, as we celebrate the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Whether you are in the cathedral or at home, we are so glad to be worshipping with you. We pray that, in our worship, we may not only remember Jesus the Child of Bethlehem, but meet him in the words of Scripture and the broken bread.

Please join in the prayers and responses marked in bold. Those in the cathedral may not join in with the singing, but if you are at home you may sing as joyfully as you wish! Feel free to sit, stand or kneel, as you find most comfortable.

A very happy Christmas from everyone at Christ Church Cathedral. May God come to meet you in this act of worship and bless you, your families and all those you love today, this Christmastide and always.

Organ Music before the Service
played by Benjamin Collyer, Senior Organ Scholar
Pastorella, BWV 590
JS Bach (1685–1750)

Setting of the Eucharist
sung by the Cathedral Consort
Spatzenmesse (K 220)
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91)

Front cover: ‘The Trinity Adored by Saints Jerome and Nicholas of Tolentino; below, the Nativity’ (JBS 46) Italian (Florentine) School
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The Sub Dean will welcome everyone just before the service begins.

Please stand when the Clergy enter. The Deacon carries the Book of the Gospels in procession and places it on the High Altar, and the President the figure of the Christ-child, which will be placed in the crib at the end of the service. The Altar is censed.

**President**

In the name of the Father, 
and of the Son, 
and of the Holy Spirit.

**All**

Amen.

The Greeting

**President**

The Lord be with you

**All**

and also with you.

The President introduces the service.

Prayers of Penitence

The Deacon invites the people to confess their sins.

**Deacon**

Hear the words of the angel to Joseph: 
‘You shall call his name Jesus, 
for he will save his people from their sins.’

Therefore let us seek the forgiveness of God through Jesus the Saviour of the world.

Please kneel. A time of silent reflection is kept.
Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour in thought and word and deed, through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen.

Absolution

The God of all healing and forgiveness draw you to himself and cleanse you from all your sins, that you may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.
Please stand, as the choir sings Gloria.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Et in terra pax
hominibus bonæ voluntatis.

Laudamus te, benedicimus te,
adoramus te, glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi
propter magnam gloriam tuam,
Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.

Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe,
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei,
Filius Patris,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
suscipe deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis.

Quoniam tu solus Sanctus;
tu solus Dominus;
tu solus Altissimus,
Jesu Christe,
cum Sancto Spiritu
in gloria Dei Patris.
Amen.

Gloria in Excelsis

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.
The Collect

President  Let us pray.

Silence is kept.

President  Eternal God,
who made this holy night
to shine with the brightness of your one true light:
bring us, who have known the revelation of your light on earth,
to see the radiance of your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All  Amen.

Please sit.

First Reading
Hebrews 1:1–4 (NRSV)

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the
prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he
appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is
the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and
he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification
for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become
as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent
than theirs.

Reader  This is the word of the Lord.
All  Thanks be to God.
The choir stands to sing a carol. Please remain seated and listen to the music.

While the choir sings, the Deacon brings the Book of the Gospels in procession to the Crossing, to be read from among the people.

Carol

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!

Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight!
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Saviour is born!

Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love’s pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth!

Words: Josef Mohr (1792–1848)
trans. JF Young (1820–1885)
Music: Franz Gruber (1787–1863)
arr. Stephen Darlington (b. 1952)

At the end of the carol, please stand for the reading of the Gospel.
Gospel Reading
John 1: 1–14 (NRSV)

Deacon   Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.
All   Glory to you, O Lord.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 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. 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 or of the will of man, but of God.

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.

Deacon   This is the Gospel of the Lord.
All   Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon
The Venerable Jonathan Chaffey
Archdeacon of Oxford

Please be seated for the sermon. Afterwards, there will be a short silence for reflection. Please stand when the Ministers stand and face East to join with the Nicene Creed.
Let us declare our faith in God

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.
Prayers of Intercession

The Precentor leads the prayers of the People.

Precentor       Let us pray.

All kneel.

After each bidding, this response is used:

Precentor       Holy God:
All              hear our prayer.

The prayers conclude with:

Precentor       Merciful Father,
All              accept these prayers
                for the sake of your Son,
                our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Please stand.

The Peace

President       Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,
                and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.

President       The peace of the Lord be always with you
All              and also with you.

Deacon          Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

Please greet those around you.

Please do not move closer to those around you. However, please offer one another a sign of peace with a warm smile, nod or bow, and with the words ‘peace be with you,’ ‘the peace of the Lord,’ or similar. The gifts of bread and wine, Altar, Ministers, and People are all censed in turn.
Please sit as the altar is prepared, and stand if you are able for the prayer at the Preparation of the Table and the Eucharistic Prayer. The president will prepare the altar himself. The elements will remain covered throughout the Eucharistic Prayer.

**Offertory Carol**

In the bleak midwinter, frosty winds made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter long ago.

Our God, Heav’n cannot hold him nor earth sustain;
Heav’n and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign:
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed.
The Lord God Almighty Jesus Christ.

Enough for him, whom cherubim worship night and day,
A breastful of milk and a mangerful of hay:
Enough for him, whom angels fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel which adore.

What can I give him poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb,
If I were a Wise Man I would do my part,
Yet what I can I give him, give my heart.

**WORDS:** Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)  
**MUSIC:** Harold Darke (1886–1976)

The President takes the bread and wine.

**President**  
Word made flesh, life of the world,  
in your incarnation you embraced our poverty:  
by your Spirit may we share in your riches.

**All**  
Amen.
The Eucharistic Prayer

President  The Lord be with you
All  and also with you.

President  Lift up your hearts.
All  We lift them to the Lord.

President  Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All  It is right to give thanks and praise.

President  All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere, mighty creator, ever-living God.

We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who for love of our fallen race humbled himself, was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of your Spirit, and lived as one of us.

In this mystery of the Word made flesh you have caused his light to shine in our hearts, to give knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ. In him we see our God made visible and so are caught up in the love of the God we cannot see.

Therefore with all the angels of heaven we lift our voices to proclaim the glory of your name and sing our joyful hymn of praise:
The Choir sings Sanctus and Benedictus:

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus
Dominus Deus Sabaoth:
pleni sunt cœli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Benedictus qui venit
in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

President

Lord, you are holy indeed, the source of all holiness;
grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit,
and according to your holy will,
these gifts of bread and wine
may be to us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ;
who, in the same night that he was betrayed,
took bread and gave you thanks;
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper
he took the cup and gave you thanks;
he gave it to them, saying:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All

Christ has died;
Christ is risen;
Christ will come again.
President

And so, Father,
calling to mind his death on the cross,
his perfect sacrifice
made once for the sins of the whole world;
rejoicing in his mighty resurrection
and glorious ascension,
and looking for his coming in glory,
we celebrate this memorial of our redemption.
As we offer you this
our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving,
we bring before you this bread and this cup
and we thank you for counting us worthy
to stand in your presence and serve you.

Send the Holy Spirit on your people
and gather into one in your kingdom
all who share this one bread and one cup,
so that we, in the company of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Joseph, Frideswide, Birinus, and all the saints,
may praise and glorify you for ever;
through Jesus Christ our Lord;

by whom, and with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be yours, almighty Father,
for ever and ever.

All

Amen.

Please kneel.
The Lord’s Prayer

President  As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:
All  

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

The President breaks the consecrated bread.

President  We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.
All  Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in the one bread.

Giving of Communion

The President invites the People to receive Communion.

President  Draw near with faith.
Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you
and in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.
The congregation in the cathedral receives Communion. Wherever we are, Jesus promises to come to meet us: if we are unable to receive the bread and wine of Communion, Jesus will come to meet us in our hearts.

So we rest in the presence of Christ in us and all around us; trusting that wherever we are, however we are, whoever we are with, Jesus comes to us as he has promised. Jesus invites us to receive him in our hearts by faith; to unite our prayers and our wills with his; and to rest in his perfect and eternal love. Without physically eating and drinking, we yet receive his body and his blood by grace.

The choir sings Agnus Dei and you may wish to make this your prayer too: Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us and grant us peace. Lamb of God, Prince of Peace, bring peace in all our pain. Lamb of God, child of Bethlehem, God with us: remain with us today and always.

**Agnus Dei**

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,  
miserere nobis.  
Agnus Dei,  
qui tollis peccata mundi,  
miserere nobis.  
Agnus Dei,  
qui tollis peccata mundi,  
dona nobis pacem.  

Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.

**Prayer after Communion**

*President*  
Let us pray.

*Please kneel. Silence is kept.*

*All*  
God our Father,  
in this night you have made known to us again  
the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:  
confirm our faith and fix our eyes on him  
until the day dawns  
and Christ the Morning Star rises in our hearts.  
To him be glory both now and for ever.  
Amen.
Please remain seated as the choir sings the final Carol, during which the Crib is prepared.

Carol

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;  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord.

God of God,  
Light of Light,  
lo! he abhors not the Virgin’s womb;  
very God,  
begotten, not created;  
O come...

Sing, choirs of angels,  
sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;  
Glory to God in the highest.  
O come...

The Blessing of the Crib

Deacon A light will shine on us this day:  
All The Lord is born for us.

Deacon Hear the words of St Luke:

When the angels had gone from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, ‘Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.’ So they hurried away, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.

All Thanks be to God.
President  Let us pray that God the Father will bless this crib, and that all who worship his Son, born of the Virgin Mary, may come to share his life in glory.

The clergy kneel and the crib is censed. The President continues:

God our Father,
on this night your Son Jesus Christ
was born of the Virgin Mary
for us and for our salvation.
Bless this crib,
which we have prepared to celebrate that holy birth;
may all who see it be strengthened in faith
and receive the fullness of life he came to bring,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

All  Amen.

The Choir sings the final verse of the hymn.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning;
Jesu, to thee be glory given!
Word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing.
O come....

WORDS: Adeste Fideles, JF Wade (1711–86)  
trans. Frederick Oakley (1802–80) and others  
MUSIC: JF Wade
All stand and the President turns to face the People.

President Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with peace and goodwill and make you partakers of the divine nature; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

Deacon Go in the peace of Christ.

All Thanks be to God.

The Choir and Ministers depart in procession.

Organ Music after the Service

played by Benjamin Collyer, Senior Organ Scholar

Improvisation on ‘Adeste, Fideles’ Francis Pott (b. 1957)
Merry Christmas!

May the light and peace of Christ remain with you, however your Christmas looks this year.

Whether you are a regular member of our congregations or not, we are always delighted to see you and would love to hear from you and pray for you. Please do keep in touch with us: to know what services are happening in person or online, to ask us to pray for you, or to become part of the community. Email us on cathedral@chch.ox.ac.uk or get in touch via our website or social media.

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