

## 2018 Christmas Midnight Mass

**1. Tonight we go to the manger to discover the mystery of Christmas.** How shall we uncover the mystery again so as to experience it again? There are three important contrasts, like an amazing gift wrapped with three wrappers. Tonight we must allow the contrasts to awaken us, to come alive in our hearts and homes again, as we unwrap this divine gift.

**2. The first wrapper is a solid gold one.** It speaks of royalty: Caesar Augustus “decreed that all the world should be enrolled.” This mighty Roman Emperor referred to himself as “son of a god.” His conquests ushered in a long reign of relative peace. In contrast our eyes are fixed on a helpless, powerless baby, the true Son of God, who brings peace to all who approach him with faith. History has many gold wrappers but God’s royal Son comes to us without the lust for power and greed that goes with it. Beside him we find his mother and father. **To encounter him we must leave behind our obsession with material things and our need to be in control.** God then opens a space where the lowly rule by love and tenderness. True peace is found there too! In the world the rulers rule the lowly by force and violence. This same Roman Rule would try to snuff out the Light of the World. Our littleness in Christ is greater than any worldly power. **Why are we still afraid and anxious? See his method of conquest!**

**3. The second wrapper is a silver one:** “And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them.” This is the third time that the angel appears in the gospel of Luke, with an unreal, unearthly light: the glory of

the Lord. Our homes are radiant with Christmas lights. But the glory of the Lord is a manifestation of God’s presence. The presence of Christ comes to our families wherever and whenever the holy name of Jesus or the Trinity is invoked and the Word of God is loved. A heavenly, unearthly light enters our homes. **But God also enters where there is more giving than taking.** As the Holy Father said in his homily: “The tiny body of the Child of Bethlehem speaks to us of a new way to live our lives: not by devouring and hoarding but by sharing and giving.” One day another radiant angel will appear to Mary Magdalen and announce to her the glory of the resurrection. **The radiant light of God is always encountered where faith is coupled with charity, where the self-giving of Jesus Christ has gripped us.**

**4. The third wrapper is a white one.** “You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” With the baby they find two adults. The baby is a special sign for Mary and Joseph too. From the conception of this baby, the fatherhood and motherhood of Mary have made a mysterious descent. They have learned to enter into a spiritual childhood of littleness. They are not afraid of their littleness, because God himself has become little. **In our littleness we encounter Jesus.** This little child will continue to mould their adult lives. One day Mary will visit another cave, in which she will find another set of blood stained linen cloths belonging to her divine Son. A Christian, or a Christian family or a community, needs both the docility and littleness of a child as well as the maturity of a disciple who has carried the cross well. **Both the wrappings of the baby and the shroud of the Passion teach**

**us that the mystery of Christmas is less about me and more about what God has done and suffered for others.** Let us wrap ourselves frequently with these linens.

**5. The greatness of the Christmas mystery is not beyond us to imitate, not beyond us to experience.** Each of these wrappings unfolds for us the meaning of the Eucharist we are about to celebrate. By his almighty Spirit he transforms bread and water into his Body and Blood, just as he took flesh from Mary's womb. By this Eucharist he gives more than he takes and longs to be always present in the intimacy of our hearts: "Take, eat, this is my body." In this Eucharist he comes to us in his littleness so that none of us may miss the encounter with him:

**The lowly for the strong. Giving rather than taking. Love of God rather than self. And the wrappings lie at our feet!**

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!"