

# Christmas 2010

QUEEN OF PEACE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY  
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA  
Rev. Jeff McGowan

## MASS AT MIDNIGHT

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Isaiah 9:1-6**

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

**Psalm 96**

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord all you lands.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Titus 2:11-14**

The grace of God has appeared.

**Gospel: Luke 2:1-14**

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them.

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Silent Night, Holy Night is being sung tonight in every region of the world.

Why do we call this feast we are celebrating a holy night? Sometimes some people are scared at night, afraid of the dark, some even have nightmares. But nighttime is also when we see all the stars. Night is when we sleep, we dream, we go into the refreshing quiet and our bodies grow and our minds clear and when morning comes we are ready for another day. So night can be difficult or it can be wondrous. But we call this night "Silent Night, Holy Night," so our hearts must be open to receive this Holy Night like a little child who does not yet shut itself to any of the possibilities of life.

A few years ago, a church in a tough, rundown neighborhood in downtown Kansas City launched an after school program for children. The idea of the new, young—and enthusiastic pastor, the program organized games, food, Bible stories and homework help for the 45-60 kids who came every afternoon. One day, a mother came to see the pastor and asked, "Are you the one running this program?" He said, "Yes, ma'am I am." "My son is in this program." "Well, we're glad to have him. I hope he is having a good time." The woman got to the point:

“He can play the games and he can eat the food, but I don’t want him listening to those stories.” The young pastor was taken aback. “We just get them out of the Bible. They are just Bible stories.” “Well, I don’t want him listening to those stories,” she said again. “Why? We’re not trying to convert him; we’re just telling Bible stories.” The mother was adamant. “He’s gotten to where he thinks he is as good as everyone else in Kansas City, and you are setting him up for a terrible disappointment. I don’t want him to hear those Bible stories any more.”

The young pastor did not know what to say or do. The young boy was hearing something his environment denied: hope, justice, healing, resurrection. The Gospel proclaims that every man, woman, elder and child possess a goodness and dignity just by virtue of being created by a loving God. The dark forces in the world project their own personal biases on others to achieve their own ends. Culture, environment, sometimes family and church too, control and manipulate people with the “best intentions,” but it really is what they think is best for *them* not what is best for the other person. The Gospel liberates people, the Gospel reminds us that God’s Eternal Word came to us in Bethlehem in that Silent Night, Holy Night and refreshed people who had fallen asleep in the darkness by giving them a dream come true: the freedom to be responsible for themselves so that we can live in integrity with the God who loves us this much. And that is Good News.

Now, we can also enjoy our annual Christmas Video.