

THE GREATEST GIFT

Sarah Attenoukon

HOPE HAS A NAME

McKenzie Rubio

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Nedra Greenidge

JOURNEY TO THE MANGER

Imani Attenoukon

Saint Ambrose Church

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Reflections read throughout the Christmas Eve Liturgy

Composed by Ms. Karah Brown

THE GREATEST GIFT

Sarah Attenoukon

[Before the Gathering Hymn]

We all love getting gifts, but the greatest gift we've ever received didn't come wrapped – He came in a manger. God loved us so much that He gave His only Son. Jesus is God's way of saying, "I see you, I love you, and I'm here for you."

This gift matters; because of sin, we were headed toward death and separation from God – but Jesus brings us life. Real life. Eternal life.

Every gift we get on earth eventually fades, but Jesus never does. He gives hope, peace, forgiveness, and a fresh start. He's the gift we didn't deserve, but the one we needed the most. This Christmas let's remember: the greatest gift wasn't placed under a tree – He was sent to save the world.

HOPE HAS A NAME

McKenzie Rubio

[At the beginning of the Liturgy of the Word]

“For unto us a child is born ... and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Long before Jesus was born, God promised that hope was coming – and He made sure we’d know His name. Scripture prophesies that the Messiah would be called Immanuel, which means, “God with us.” That’s what makes Him our hope: He didn’t stay far away. He came close; He stepped into our world, our struggles, and our story.

When life feels confusing, Jesus is our Counselor.

When we feel weak, He is Mighty God.

When we feel alone, He is God with us.

Hope isn’t just a feeling or a wish – hope is a person. Hope has a name and His name is Jesus.

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Nedra Greenidge

[After the homily]

“Arise, shine, for your light has come.” That light is Jesus – the one God sent to bring hope to dark places. Wherever He shows up, things change. Shadows move. Brokenness lifts. Hearts wake up.

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” No matter how heavy life feels, how confusing things get, or how dark the world seems, Jesus is stronger. His light can’t be stopped or pushed out. Jesus doesn’t just shine around us – He shines in us. He helps us see, grow, and walk with confidence. And because of Him, we never have to face darkness alone. Jesus is the light that wins every time.

JOURNEY TO THE MANGER

Imani Attenoukon

[After the Sign of Peace and before the Lamb of God]

THE CALL

I wasn't looking for greatness that day. No angel, no prophecy, no miracle. Just an ordinary girl in Nazareth, hands busy with simple things, heart dreaming simple dreams.

Then ... the light shifted. The room grew still. And I heard my name – spoken by a voice that didn't belong to this earth. *“Mary... you are highly favored.”*

My knees trembled.

My thoughts scattered.

But the words kept coming – holy words ... heavy words Words that could change the world. *“You will give birth to a son.”*

Not just any son ... God's son. The Messiah we had prayed for ... waited for ... longed for. I didn't understand it. I couldn't make sense of any of it. But something inside me whispered, “Trust Him.” So I said the only thing I could – “Let it be according to your word.”

And from that moment ... my life was no longer my own.

THE JOURNEY

Months later, swollen with promise and pain, Joseph and I found ourselves on a dusty road to Bethlehem. Eighty miles on foot ... with a body that felt it could break at any moment.

Some days I cried silently, because the weight inside me was more

than physical. I was carrying salvation – and salvation is new light. Joseph stayed beside me. Steady. Gentle. His hand was ready to catch me when the road grew rough. Every kick from the child reminded me – “I’m coming. Hold on.”

BETHLEHEM

By the time we reached the city, the contractions had already started. Sharp ... deep ... like the whole world was pushing through me. Joseph knocked on door after door – his voice cracking with urgency: “Please ... my wife ... she’s in labor.”

But there was no room. No space. No welcome.

Finally – mercy.

A stable. A floor of hay. The smell of animals filling the air ... and a cold night pressing against my skin. It wasn’t the birthplace I imagined for a King. But God doesn’t need perfection – He just needs surrender.

And then ... in the quiet of that holy night ... between the pain and promise ... He came.

My son.

God’s Son.

The Light of the World.

Wrapped in rags and resting in a manger.

I felt His tiny face and felt heaven breathing on my chest.

THE SHEPHERDS

We thought the night was ending. But for God... the night was just beginning. Suddenly shepherds – men smelling of sheep and smoke – burst into the stable breathless. Their eyes wide with wonder.

“Angels,” they said. “Angels filled the sky. Glory surrounded us. They told us about the Child – your Child!”

And then these rugged men dropped to their knees before the baby I had just delivered. They worshiped Him. They praised Him. They cried tears of joy over a promise finally kept.

I said nothing. I simply held the child closer and let their words wash over me. And there, in that dim stable light ... I understood. He wasn't just mine. He belonged to the world.

So I treasured it all – every word, every sign, every whisper of God in the night. I tucked it deep inside my heart, because motherhood is remembering even when you don't understand. And as I looked down at Him – this tiny King in my arms – I whispered, “Here I am Lord ... still saying yes.”