

Christmas Eve 2025: Holy Communion midnight service Ampleforth

Advent wreath candle 5: Lord Jesu, Light to Light, you have come among us. Help us to live by your light to shine as lights in your world. Glory to God in the highest. Amen

Do you remember how the whole biblical story begins and we hear again on Christmas morning from the Gospel of John? “In the...” And do you remember the first creation that is spoken into being and we are told by John came into the world? “Let there be...”

On Christmas Eve, we celebrate a new *beginning*. We welcome the dawning of a new *light*. A new day begins with sunrise. A new year begins with lengthening days. A new life begins with infant eyes taking in their first view of a world bathed in light. And a new era in human history began when God’s light came shining into our world through Jesus.

The Fourth Gospel tells us that what came into being through Jesus was not merely a new religion, a new theology, or a new set of principles or teachings—although all of these things did indeed happen. The real point of it all, according to John, was *life*, vitality, *aliveness*—and now that Jesus has come, that radiant aliveness is here to enlighten all people everywhere.

Some people don’t see it yet. Some don’t want to see it. They’ve got some shady plans that they want to preserve undercover, in darkness.... They don’t welcome the light, because transparency exposes their plans and deeds for what they are: evil, so they prefer darkness.

But others welcome the light. They receive it as a gift, and in that receiving, they let God’s holy, radiant aliveness stream into their lives. They become portals of light in our world....

What do we mean when we say Jesus is the light? Just as a glow on the eastern horizon tells us that a long night is almost over, Jesus’ birth signals the beginning of the end for the dark night of fear, hostility, violence, and greed that has descended on our world. Jesus’ birth signals the start of a new day, a new way, a new understanding of what it means to be alive.

Aliveness, he will teach, is a gift available to all by God's grace. It flows not from taking, but giving, not from fear but from faith, not from conflict but from reconciliation, not from domination but from service. It isn't found in the outward trappings of religion—rules and rituals, controversies and scruples, temples and traditions. No, it springs up from our innermost being like a fountain of living water. It intoxicates us like the best wine ever and so turns life from a disappointment into a banquet. This new light of aliveness and love opens us up to rethink everything—to go back and become like little children again. Then we can rediscover the world with a fresh, childlike wonder—seeing the world in a new light, the light of Christ.

Thanks be to God. Amen