This in many ways is my favorite day of Church in what we secularly call the Christmas Season and the reason for this is that expectations are so low.  The Christmas Eve service has to fulfill so many wishes and desires - it is supposed to be that last spiritual hurrah before we rip open our presents and eat too much rib roast.  The music has to be just right, the message has to be inspiring but not too religious, the kids have to adorable and the sanctuary needs to be well adorned but not tacky.  Christmas Day however is the quiet day where we can simply come and say thank you.  It's that quiet moment that we carve out to reflect and celebrate the nativity.  I find it to be the service that it is in the Goldilocks zone - not too much, not too little but just right.

Everyone has their reasons for being here, some can't imagine not being here, some may have missed last night and others may have woken up and simply thought that it would be a nice thing to do. But whatever the reason there is the knowledge that everything didn't end last night and that we are here to reflect on the monumental events of this day in the only way we can, by coming to Church and participating in the ancient mysteries of the liturgy which somehow process the variety of emotions, expectations and whatever else we experience in this time of year.

We know the story, we understand it to an extent but I think this morning we come to simply be present. A friend of mine used to say that you never go out on New Years Eve because that’s amateur hour, if you really want to party he said you should do it on a Tuesday morning. I am not sure if I would go as far as calling Christmas Eve amateur hour, but I think this morning might be the time for the really serious people. And please don’t think I am saying that everyone who is not here has suspect devotion to God, but rather today is the day we show up and no one probably notices. It is not the time to be seen and there is no peer pressure to do much of anything. Today is to paraphrase the 19th century French slogan “Church for Church’s sake.” It is a time listen for that still small voice of God that may have been drowned out by all of the noise of the season. And since it is just we few, we happy few let me be a bit indulgent this morning and end with reading a bit of John Milton’s, *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*

This is the month, and this the happy morn,

      Wherein the Son of Heav'n's eternal King,

Of wedded Maid, and Virgin Mother born,

      Our great redemption from above did bring;

      For so the holy sages once did sing,

            That he our deadly forfeit should release,

            And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,

      And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty,

Wherewith he wont at Heav'n's high council-table,

      To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,

      He laid aside, and here with us to be,

            Forsook the courts of everlasting day,

            And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

Say Heav'nly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein

      Afford a present to the Infant God?

Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,

      To welcome him to this his new abode,

      Now while the heav'n, by the Sun's team untrod,

            Hath took no print of the approaching light,

            And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

See how from far upon the eastern road

      The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet:

O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,

      And lay it lowly at his blessed feet;

      Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,

            And join thy voice unto the angel quire,

            From out his secret altar touch'd with hallow'd fire.