

Christmas Eve Eucharist

This doesn't need much explanation as it was written for a Eucharist celebrated at midnight on Christmas Eve which puts the events of Jesus' birth alongside the events of Jesus' death. This parallel would probably never have occurred to me until I heard a minister describe the experience of accompanying a friend through the process of dying as akin to taking on the role of a midwife. I rather like this image as it brings a kind of circularity to life which honours the messy, painful processes of both birth and death.

A pregnant woman
a worried father to be
a rush to get the donkey ready
leaving home when instinct says stay

An itinerant preacher
worried disciples
a rush to get the donkey ready
riding into Jerusalem when instinct says flee

A couple weary
and exhausted from the journey
going from dwelling to dwelling
fearful of giving birth out in the cold

A charismatic leader
gathers fearful disciples together
hiding in an upper room
knowing fate is sealed

Mary and Joseph
at last find a welcome
a brief respite and somewhere warm
as contractions begin

Gathered around a table
a woman approaches
soothes Jesus with ointment
and wipes tears with her hair

A first labour hour upon hour
waves of pain endlessly endured
the threshold of life and death
the journey into the unknown

A cross on a hillside
waves of pain endlessly endured
the threshold of life and death
the journey into the unknown

This is my body
This is my blood
This is my life
This is my death

Do this in memory of me
Do this in celebration of me

[share bread and wine]

A cry splits the night
a sigh of relief all is well
an empty womb
sign of new birth

A cry splits the dawn
the world breathes again
an empty tomb
sign of new birth

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