



# Christian Education

A series of Sermons and Occasional Papers  
From the clergy and members  
of Holy Trinity Church  
Forbes Park, Makati

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Title: **"Midnight"**  
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## Readings for this Sunday:

First Reading Genesis 15:1-6  
Second Reading Hebrews 11:1-7  
Gospel Luke 12:32-40

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Today is "Cinderella" Day for Holy Trinity. This afternoon's 5:30 show is one of our two major fund-raising productions by Repertory Philippines this year. I did some research into the Cinderella story to see whether there was more to her than meets the eye, and there is. There are several ancient legends or myths that seem to be the ancestors of the fairy tale that we have inherited. An ancient Egyptian version with a woman named Rhodopis involves lost slippers, and there's even a Chinese take on the story with a woman named Ye Xian who is kept home by her wicked stepmother and who leaves behind a golden shoe at a festival which she secretly attends.

Fairy tales, from whatever culture or tradition, are meant to have a moral, usually something that children can use as they grow up to understand life and morality better. Psychologists and anthropologists have written volumes about the origins and purposes of such stories. Even Christian parents tell these stories to their children, despite the presence of such things as fairies and witches. There seems to be a general acceptance that even these quasi-pagan secular myths can be used for God's purposes.

One thing that features in many fairy tales is the idea that strange, dangerous and wonderful things happen at midnight. Cinderella is told that she must return home by 12 o'clock, and in other tales midnight is the time for other spells to either begin or end. On a sinister level, midnight is sometimes known as the "Witching Hour."

Midnight awakens different reactions according to a person's temperament and manner of life. For some it is a time of partying and fun. For others it is a time of fear and loneliness. For yet others, it can be a time of rest, or a time for reflection and prayer- a time for entrusting oneself to God's infinite capacity to provide physical and spiritual renewal. That, too, can happen at the "holy hour" of midnight.

Our Christian forebears in the early years of the Church lived in the conviction that midnight was a special time. Early tradition, based on suggestive Bible passages, said that it was in the middle of the night's course that Jesus was born: that is the origin of our "Midnight Mass" at Christmas. It was also the hour when early Christians, looking at other Old Testament passages, believed that Christ rose from the dead so that the tomb would be found empty at dawn on Easter Day. For that reason, throughout several hundred years, Easter was observed at an all-night service. Not only did this recall Christ's Resurrection, but it also reflected the belief that Christ would come back to earth in the middle of Easter Night Vigil, too. Christians were encouraged to be ready for when this would take place.

History soon showed that the wait would be longer than was first expected. Luke's Gospel passage today insists on the fact that the Second Coming must be waited for in patient expectation, even though we cannot know precisely when it will be. The Master, we are told, will come like a thief in the night to surprise everyone. The danger of being taken by surprise is that we may not be ready. And that is the point of today's Gospel about the lazy servant who thinks he's got plenty of time.

Even when the midnight of darkness of unbelief seems to spread over the world, and the "little flock" of the Church seems to shrink before our eyes, we must stay awake and watch, without fear, in the hope that the Master will come soon and invite us to sit down to share a meal. At it He will wait on us himself. And that will mark the

beginning of a day that has no end, and the glorious consummation of all of our  
midnights.