

POOL REPORT

FORDS AT MIDNIGHT MASS

DECEMBER 25, 1976

The Fords arrived at the Vail Interfaith Chapel just before midnight, greeted by Father Robert White and Deacon Jerry McMahon. Sons Jack, Mike and Steve, plus Gayle and Susan not there, no reason given. President wearing blue turtleneck, red sports coat, Mrs. Ford in red checked dress, fur coat. Sons all dressed casually, Gayle in green sweater and skirt. Fords sat four rows from back.

Service opened with "O, Come All ye Faithful". Story of birth of Christ read from Luke. Father White said in his sermon, the message of Christmas is that God loves us.

"Let's start the new year by being more conscious of the Love of God," he said. "Let us have a new beginning (in 1977).

White later asked God to hear prayers "for snow and moisture" for skiers and farmers. No mention of Fords in service.

Communion was given but none of the Fords took it.

The service ended at 1:05 a.m. The Fords left and exchanged Christmas greetings with Father White, who thanked them for coming. Despite zero weather, a large crowd was waiting for the Fords to greet them and take pictures. About 250 people attended the service, with some standing in the aisles. Others were turned away at the door.

Russ Ward, NBC
Robert Green, Reuters

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