



Midnight Mass

F. Paul Wilson

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Vampires have always lived in Eastern Europe. But with the fall of the Soviet Union, they began to spread across the continent, then the world, turning whole populations into vampires--or human cattle. Having overrun India, the far East, and the great cities of North and South America, the forces of Night are now spreading into the countryside to consolidate their conquest.

In a town on the New Jersey shore, the vampires have just arrived, along with their human henchmen, the cowboys, who round up human cattle for the overlords in return for the promise of eternal life---later. For the vampires wish only a few of their own kind to rule, and feed. The rest of humanity are to be helpless herds, the source of the blood of life.

Falsely accused of abuse, Father Joe is drunk in a basement waiting for the end. His superior has betrayed the local Catholic congregation and become a vampire. Sister Carole has become a formidable killer of cowboys and vampires. Dan's niece, escaped from the conquest of New York, has made her way south to find him. Brought together by Rabbi Zev Wolpin, who is shaken by the vampires' fear of the cross and holy water, they plan their resistance. Against all odds, they discover that there just might be a way for humanity to really fight back.

But first they will have to kill the vampire king of New York.

Midnight Mass Details

Date : Published November 1st 2005 by TOR Books (first published 1990)

ISBN : 9780765346346

Author : F. Paul Wilson

Format : Mass Market Paperback 403 pages

Genre : Horror, Paranormal, Vampires, Fiction, Fantasy

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From Reader Review *Midnight Mass* for online ebook

Jim says

If you're as sick of floppy-haired vampire heartthrobs as I, read this book. Wilson's vampires are the repellent, bloodsucking bastards we've come to lovingly loathe. These vampires are more *Dracula* and *Salem's Lot* than Team Edward.

When the teenage girls of the world (and some of their moms) were dividing into Team Jason or Team Edward, I had already declared for Team Buffy. First of all, it's BUFFY. Second, I've always been more interested in the vampire hunters. Too often, the vampire geeks of the world seem like sad types with low self-esteem, the kind who, in more extreme cases, become serial killer groupies. Wilson takes some shots at Anne Rice novels and goth-type vampire-wannabes who find that getting what you want isn't always so great. (Not every victim gets turned; some just die horribly.) Also, Wilson has a lot of former investment bankers, politicians, and lawyers becoming vampires or the human weasels who help them, a touch that I liked.

In this book, the hunters have their work cut out. The vampires have taken over the entire eastern hemisphere and are well into their assault on the New World. The mortal world needs a savior, and he is Father Joe, a priest with a past. He is helped by his niece an atheist lesbian martial artist, a killer nun, and Zev the cross-wearing rabbi. There is an uncomfortable subtext involving Jewish-Christian relations, what with the efficacy of the cross against vampires and the mass death of Jews who refused the pragmatic step of wearing a cross. Wilson is careful to say that the power of the cross symbol might pre-date Christianity. He also has a Jewish hero and Christian villains (One of the main vampires is a pedophile priest.), and Wilson's main villains, religion-wise, are people who break ethical rules as opposed to theological ones. If there's a theological standpoint in the novel, it's that religious divisions and intolerance are dangerous.

In terms of the undead, Wilson doesn't break any new ground; his vampires are in the classic mode. They can't take sunlight or crosses. They're killed with the old-fashioned methods, sunlight, stakes, beheading, etc. In a lot of ways, this is a very retro vampire novel, but it's all the better for that. The strength of this book is in the quality of the writing, its stark atmosphere, and its kickassness.

Chloe says

So a rabbi, a priest, a psychotic nun and a militant lesbian atheist walk into a bar... Sounds like the beginning of a truly awful joke, doesn't it? That's exactly what I thought when a friend of mine was describing it to me. I'd never read any F. Paul Wilson before and have to admit to not a few ounces of trepidation, yet I am always interested in tales of fiendish bloodsuckers crushing mortals under their heels so figured I'd give it a shot.

Wilson writes in the forward to this quick action read that he wanted to write a book that returned vampires to their crypts and sewers rather than the romantic aesthetes that Anne Rice and Stephanie Meyer have turned these horrors into. The premise is simple: tired of hiding in the shadows, vampires have come out of their coffins and made their existence known to the world. Yet, whereas Charlaine Harris' vampires are interested in co-existing with humankind, Wilson's hordes sweep first across the former Soviet bloc nations and then the rest of the world, bringing humanity to heel and now beginning to begin their incursion in the

New World.

Wonderful premise, right? Who doesn't want to hear tales of humankind's war against the cognizant undead (as opposed to the mindless shuffling of zombie hordes)? Sadly, Wilson decides to portray the human resistance as being solely in the hands of disaffected priest, wily rabbi and traumatized nun. Are we really to believe that the rest of the world is so paralyzed by an inability to wrap their head around the fact that vampires actually exist that they just lie back with their throats exposed? No one thought to resist before these three people *in New Jersey*? Also, once the revolution begins are these ancient creatures so inept that they can't even muster an adequate defense? A lot of characters do a lot of stupid illogical things.

Yet that's the world that Wilson chooses to work in so, I guess, as readers we just have to go with it. His vamps are definitely not the emo poseurs of Anne Rice, but true monsters who care not a lick for the fleshbags that make up their meals. *Midnight Mass* is a fun read that I didn't want to put down and served as a nice distraction from the lengthy tome that has been my primary reading material of late. It definitely makes me interested in reading F. Paul Wilson's highly regarded Repairman Jack books.

Nora says

YES!

Mike (the Paladin) says

I sat up late and finished this book last night. It's not a "bad book" I didn't hate it, but I had some gripes and it really didn't hold my interest.

I like Wilson's "Repairman Jack" books, at least I've liked most of them so far. So when I read the synopsis of this one and it sounded interesting, I picked it up.

I am sort of a "vampire purist" if you are referring to the vampires we all know from Bram Stoker, that is the Eastern European variety (as opposed to say the Asian vampires which are based on a totally different mythology). I'm always a bit annoyed by the modern romantic, lonely, "safe", "friendly", "why don't we date", vampires. If you like vampire protagonists, that's fine...I don't. Wilson expressed the same sentiments here so that interested me a bit over and above the plot. Unfortunately Mr. Wilson's view of blood-suckers seems to have been influenced more by movies than by Bram Stoker (though Stoker's classic vamps have been pretty badly used in the last few years to). He admits that the "folklore vampires" didn't die in the sunlight, but he chooses to use the device...okay fine. I'm not fond of it, but okay. The big change was his use of the "everyone who gets bit becomes a vamp" motif. Again it's his book and that's fine...but it bugs me as vampires from Stoker on had to purposefully "make" another vamp. (Of course in folklore there was some disagreement as to how one became a vamp, suicides and others were thought to change also. Oh well).

As I said I've read the Repairman Jack books, but a good many years ago I ran across a Wilson book "The Keep" which I found, much like this one...okay but not great. The way I felt about that book was why it took me so long to try Repairman Jack. Wilson calls The Keep a pseudo-vampire book, I suppose that's a good definition, but he ends up dealing with the same "issues" here that he tried to deal with there. Wilson described himself in the intro to this book as a "recovering Catholic" I don't know (I'm not a Roman

Catholic)if that's the same as what other Catholics would call a "failed Catholic" or not...but Wilson certainly has issues with belief.

Most "traditional" vampire stories use Christian symbology...this has just been part of the story. Wilson apparently struggles with this. One of his characters describes herself as a "confirmed agnostic". I suppose that to be Mr. Wilson's stance also based on the book's plot and story. (By the way, as "agnostic" means "I don't know" how can one be a "confirmed I don't know"? Just my weird brain asking the question I guess) In *The Keep* the "semi-cross" (it turns out not to be a cross) that drives back the pseudo-vampire (or proto-vampire) causes a sort of crisis of faith for an old Jewish man. In this book he incorporates a Rabi into his protagonists...however this guy seems to be handling things a lot better (like maybe he regards Jesus as a nice Jewish boy or something). I wonder why we didn't have a Buddhist, an Islamic, maybe a Taoist...the possible list is endless. He writes some miraculous scenes but seems (to me) a little uncomfortable with it and makes it a sort of...we don't get this but look it works, sort of thing.

It's a readable book and some will undoubtedly like it far more than I did. I didn't hate it. I give it 3 stars but don't plan to reread, recommend, or keep it.

Jane Stewart says

The book kept my interest. There were some neat ideas, but the ending was bad.

I wanted to give this 4 stars, but I went with 3 because of the ending. It was good concerning a battle and there was hope for the future. But I was annoyed because two good guys died at different times in the book.

The vampires are taking over the world. It's apocalyptic. A few individuals make some cool wins against the vampires. I liked the intelligence and thoughtfulness.

I liked the group of four main characters and how they interacted. I loved the way a nun became a great guerilla fighter who killed humans and vampires, yet she had angst over what she had become. We see the beginning of a love relationship between two characters but it's not developed. I wish more had been done with that.

Some ideas I liked:

(p 267-268) A lesbian was gang raped by a group of men who helped the vampires. The following are her thoughts. "In the old civilized world I would have been thinking, 'How could this happen? And Why me?' I would have felt like some sort of pariah or loser, that the world and society had let me down, that some throwbacks had smashed through all the rules and targeted me. And I would have felt somehow to blame. I know I'd have wanted to dig myself a hole and pull the ground over me. ...It's a different world now, a world without any rules, except maybe those of the jungle. There's no law, no order, and because of that, I don't seem to have that pariah-loser-victim feeling. And I don't feel ashamed. I feel disgusted and sickened and violated, but I don't feel ashamed. I feel hate and I want revenge, but I don't feel a need to hide. A year ago I'd have felt scarred for life. Now I feel... as if I've been splattered with mud -- rotten, nasty mud -- but nothing I can't wash off and then move on."

When vampires plan to take over the world, the first places they go are Jewish and Muslim communities where there are no crosses. Now a rabbi carries a cross around his neck for protection. A cross is like a

blinding light to a vampire. Touching a cross burns their skin.

(p 144) The Rabbi is thinking about kosher foods and how he had to change to survive. "If he hadn't changed, he couldn't sit here and sup with these two men and this young woman. He'd have to be elsewhere, eating special classes of ritually prepared foods off separate sets of dishes. But really, hadn't division been the main thrust of holding to the dietary laws in modern times? They served a purpose beyond mere observance of tradition. They placed another wall between observant Jews and outsiders, keeping them separate even from fellow Jews who didn't observe. ... Time to break down all the walls between people... while there was still enough time and people left alive to make it matter."

(p 188) "A steady stream of newcomers, anxious to join the fight, had been flowing to the church all morning. Many of them were not even Catholic. Jews, Protestants, even Muslims were showing up, wanting to know how they could be part of what was happening. ... The arbitrary walls that had separated people in the past had to be knocked down. There could be only one belief system now: the living versus the undead and those who sided with them."

There was also something about the Catholic church. I don't know if this is true, but the author wrote that priests used to be allowed to marry and have children. But as a result priests would give their accumulated wealth to their families when they died instead of to the church. Therefore the church changed the rules not allowing priests to marry.

DATA:

Narrative mode: 3rd person. Story length: 403 pages. Swearing language: strong including religious swear words. Sexual content: no specific scenes, but reference to a rape happening. Setting: near future east coast U.S. Copyright: 2004. Genre: apocalyptic paranormal fiction.

Becca says

I ended up putting this one down 30 pages from the ending b/c i got busy with other shit, but then 29 days out from my last update, I realized i don't actually give a damn what happens in the end. Wilson writes in the introduction that he wanted to get back to vampires that were actually scary and predatory instead of brooding and mysteriously sexy. I agree with the goal but he missed by a mile with this book. The bad guys are one note and only frightening in an 80's high-on-coke-&-power Wall Street executive way and the good guys, a down and out drunk priest and a nun that's turned to playing killer prostitute are too busy being guilty about their wavering faith and growing sin tally to be interesting. If you want a scary vampire tale I say stick with the old standby's Bram and Salem's Lot.

David Agranoff says

When I was young there were three authors I could also count on, that I considered my three favorite authors whose books I enjoyed over every one else. Those three were Clive Barker, Richard Matheson and Stephen King. As an adult my tastes have changed, the amount of authors I have read have expanded and within the last year I put F.Paul Wilson into my current top three(Today he is with John Shirley and Robert McCammon).

Midnight Mass is prime example of why Wilson is on my top three list. Compared to a lyrical artist like Barker - Wilson's no frills stripped down prose is perfect for me. Wilson is focused on the important stuff, story and characters. No one plots a novel or epic tale like Wilson, while this stand alone novel doesn't entirely showcase that strength as well as the Secret History of the World stories, this novel is perfectly plotted.

The greatest strength of Midnight Mass is the excellent characters and anyone who has read a Wilson novel knows none of those characters are safe. Wilson has knack for plot misdirection, often he will convince you a character is protagonist who you are prepared to join on this journey when they up a die, leaving you shocked 1/3 of the way through the book. That happened to me reading Midnight Mass, when a character I assumed was the hero gave up his life to save a friend. Wilson is tough on characters, and rarely is anyone safe. It adds tension to his books for sure.

Midnight Mass is a vampire apocalypse story, Wilson's long awaited take on the creatures (he tricked us in the Keep, making that novel seem like a vampire novel when it was something much darker) and it was worth the wait. This is not a rehash of I Am Legend but the water comes from the same well. In this novel Vampires have taken over Europe, India and the middle east. China and the U.S. Are fighting the rising tide. The east coast is under vampire control at night, human blood farms are growing along with a human resistance.

The two main characters are a disgraced priest who was falsely accused of child molestation just before the end times, a nun who secretly loved him and his best friend a rabbi. Add in the priest's militant vegan feminist niece and it sounds like you have a set up for a joke. No punch line here, just fantastic and interesting characters. Wilson develops them well, and tests their various faiths as the world ends around them.

This is far from my favorite Wilson novel, but that has more to do with the strength of his various other works. It is a great well thought out take on the Vampire mythos and a must read for fans of serious vampire novels.

Robjr73 says

This is the SECOND time I was let down down a bit by a Wilson vampire novel. The first time was with The Keep. That book's first half is vampire perfection and the second half of the book takes a total different turn. Well Midnight Mass is much the same. The book is divided into Parts 1 & 2. Part 1 is solid. The first fifty pages or so are genuinely scary. Then near the end of part 1 the author kills off my favorite character. Not cool. Then part two begins and the whole feel of the book changes. It suddenly feels like a bad sci fi channel movie with horrible dialogue. I simply lost interest in the second half and unfortunately this won't fall in my top five vampire novels.

My top four in case you're wondering would probably comprise of:

Salems Lot
They Thirst
Dracula
Interview With A Vampire

Granted there are some classics I have yet to read so this list could change over time.

My recommendation is if you want good F. Paul Wilson stick to his Repairman Jack series.

Kelsey says

This was a frustratingly bad book. If it had continued more in the post-apocalyptic vein, like the first 10 pages, I might have given it another star. As it was, the second half has been a slog.

Seriously, bad characterization and plot development here. The dialogue was embarrassing to read. The vampires have to explain in terrible, cheesy, monologues how truly evil they really are (!). The main character seems like a hopeless self-insertion. He is the manliest man who ever was, and has no flaws. The other characters have to keep repeating how great and admirable he is, because otherwise the reader wouldn't get it.

I felt like the whole book is Wilson trying to put in the most shocking and gruesome things he can think of in the hopes of seeming "edgy" or even "scary". He misses the mark, widely. We have everything from cannibalism to killing babies, but it's not scary. It seems very cliché, and mainstream.

There was plenty of action in this book. It was slow in the middle, but never got overly wordy. Popcorn, ok. Bad dialogue - not ok.

William Malmberg says

If vampires are real, and their bite spreads the infection, then how come they haven't taken over the world? I used to hear this question all the time when I was younger, my little brother always tossing it my way whenever I tried to talk to him about a possible vampire novel or series that I wanted to write (still want to write). It is a legitimate question, yet one that I never had a satisfactory answer for at the time, and rather than trying to reason it out with him, I usually just switched topics to something more easily discussed -- something like UFOs or Bigfoot. Later I realized my brother wasn't the only one asking this question and that it has actually been a topic of debate in the horror community for decades, one that is often 'explained' to us time and time again through the visions of horror writers and filmmakers. Sometimes these visions are pretty good and the reasons given for the lack of a vampire ruled world seems legit, other times it is just silly (vampires are just troubled humans who don't really want to hurt anyone and therefore keep their desires in check until the need for blood is unbearable -- come on, they are 'creatures' of the night, not 'delicate troubled youths' of the night!). And then sometimes an explanation is not needed because the vision presented gives us a world ruled by vampires.

F. Paul Wilson gives us just such a vision in his novel *Midnight Mass*, a semi-apocalyptic tale that pits the last remnants of humanity against the vampires who, realizing an opportunity for world domination after the fall of the Soviet Union, have taken over all of Europe and Asia, their spread rapid due to the ability to create vampires with each kill. Now, however, wanting to keep the spread of vampires in check so that they don't become too many for the limited human blood supply, the vampires move slowly in conquering North America, the goal being to round up all the humans into 'cattle camps' while taking over the major cities. Using human counterparts known as 'cowboys' to do most of the dirty work, the vampires are well on their

way to accomplishing their goal of ruling the world. In New Jersey, however, a small group of humans have decided they would rather fight to the death than give in to being cattle, and have barricaded themselves inside a church. Hunting down and killing cowboys by day, and then hunkering down and protecting themselves against the vampires at night, these humans have pretty much accepted the idea that they will eventually be destroyed and just want to cause as much trouble for the vampires as they can. While doing this they make a chance discovery, one which just might give humanity an opportunity for survival. At the same time their continual destruction has caught the eye of New York's Vampire King, one who views these humans as a thorn that must be plucked free. Will the small band of humans be able to survive the Vampire King, and spread hope for humanity, or will they too succumb to the overwhelming power of the vampire threat?

Originally intended as a novella for a vampire themed publication in the early nineties, one which was then added to over the years as opportunities arose to revisit the compelling vampire landscape by publishers looking for new stories, F. Paul Wilson slowly but surely managed to create a vampire novel that is considered by many to be one of the best of the genera -- something which I won't argue against because I believe it to be true as well. A big part of this success was due to F. Paul Wilson's desire to use the well known basic vampire myths in creating this novel rather than twisting them around or creating his own like so writers have done over the years (Stephen King made this decision when writing 'Salem's Lot, which in turn created a 'best of the vampire genera' book as well, something which Wilson praises in his introduction to *Midnight Mass*). Another important factor was the writing talent used to produce this story, talent that many readers have discovered over the years and desperately crave. One doesn't have to be a vampire fan to enjoy *Midnight Mass*, but, like the infectious bite of the vampire, one may be turned into a fan of such tales once this book grabs hold. If nothing else it will make one a F. Paul Wilson fan, assuming of course that one isn't already a fan of this author's wonderful story telling abilities.

The Flooze says

(Firstly, why is the book description wrong? It's Father Joe and Sister Carole. Who the heck are Dan and Carolyn?)

Thrilling and horrific, with a dose humorous irony. Wilson's *Midnight Mass* is a return to the grisly, purely evil side of vampiric lore. And it's a welcome addition to a genre inundated with romanticized depictions.

Reminiscent of Stephen King's *The Stand*, *Midnight Mass* flashes back and forth between several groups, allowing us to see events unfold through everyone's perspective: the hopeful Rabbi Zev, the towering Irishman Father Joe, the nun turned vigilante, the jaded and determined feminist, the cowboys who rustle up humans, and finally the vampires who've brought chaos to the east coast.

The pace is fast and furious, with heart-stopping moments of insanity that clutch at your throat.

The characterizations here are great, though a tad clichéd, and the different perspectives give each personality greater meaning. You'll root for the ragtag rebellion, and laugh and cry along with them as they struggle to regain humanity's hold on the world.

The ending comes a little suddenly, and while not a cliffhanger, it does leave the door wide open for a follow-up. I hope we get to see more of these characters in the future.

Michael says

A Vampire-genre novel, written by one of my favorite authors. Not part of a serial, a stand-alone work. What I term a "Vampire Apocalypse" has occurred, turning large portions of our global population into vampires. Humans not turned either exist in fear in small areas, or are raised as cattle.

The vampires behave as vampires in the traditional sense; they do not get to venture out of doors, they cringe at the sight of a cross, burn in sunlight, and are scarred by the cross.

Midnight Mass is an action novel; lots of biting, decapitations, and blood. A small group of hold-outs living in New Jersey try to take their community back from the vampires and the human wranglers that gather up their fellow humans - to be used as cattle or sacrifices.

The prose reads fast, the pace is quick, and the novel is a good fast read. A good book to read on a plane, a long car trip, or if you want something different than the new vampire fare.

Kaisersoze says

Okay, this is awkward, but I somehow managed to read an abridged version of this book as part of a collection of novellas. I know this because it features only two of the characters discussed in the synopsis.

Sadly, I can only assume they were the two least exciting characters as their plight did little to move me, and given the end of this novella, it cannot be a prequel.

Anyway, yes, vampires. They're the threat in **Midnight Mass**, and at least they're of the nasty type. No sparkly ones to be found here. Unfortunately, other than this admirable fact, there's little to recommend this one over the hundreds of other such reads out there.

2 Men of God in it Together for **Midnight Mass**.

Keri says

The best vampire book EVAH! One day F. Paul I hope you will let us visit Father Dan and his niece and see how they are doing in the world of vampires. If you want to read a good romance book with no sparkly vampires, just pure true evil ones, this is the book.

Re-read for Halloween 2010 and it was just as good! Scary and good! Father Dan has vampire issues. The vampires want to take over the world.....for a food supply that is. Evidently us humans are mighty tasty. Now Father Dan must come to terms with his faith as he battles these evil fanged baddies. He has a ragtag band of helpers that battle by his side. Will faith and goodness triumph over evil? You will have to read to find out!

BOO!

Melissa says

Midnight Mass was interesting enough, but only just enough to keep me reading. The vampires are awful creatures and not lovey-doveys; that alone makes it star-worthy. The other characters...well, let me roll my eyes and say that another reviewer hit the nail on the head when he joked about a priest, a rabbi, a nun, and a militant lesbian walking into a bar. The pacing of the story was good and there was plenty of build-up and action. I just can't point to the reason why I found it only just good enough, but perhaps it is because this book falls more into the urban fantasy genre than horror.
