

AT THE MANGER

Family Celebrations for the Eight Days of Christmas.

In its present form the custom of displayed figures depicting the birth of Jesus Christ owes its origin to Saint Francis of Assisi (c.1181-1226) who made the Christmas Crèche or Manger for Christmas Eve of 1223 at Greccio, Italy:

"I wish to recall to memory the little child who was born in Bethlehem, I want to set before our bodily eyes the hardship of his infant needs, how he lay in the manger, how with an ox and ass standing by he lay upon the hay."

Since then it has been a familiar sight in Christian homes and public places, all over the world. However, as early as the fourth century representations of the nativity of the Lord were printed as wall decorations depicting not only the infancy narrative accounts of Christ's birth, but also the words of the prophets Isaiah and Habakkuk taken to mean that the Messiah would be born in the midst of animals in a manger.

(Book of Blessings N.1541 adapted ©1987 ICEL).

'During Christmastide, the Church celebrates the mystery of the Lord's manifestation: his humble birth in Bethlehem which was made known to the shepherds, the first of Israel to welcome the Saviour; the Epiphany to the three wise men who had "come from the East" (Matthew 2:1), the first of the Gentiles who recognised and adored Christ the Messiah in the child of Bethlehem...'. (Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy. N.106).

Like Easter, the Nativity of the Lord is one of the two solemnities in the Ordinary Form of the Church's liturgical calendar that has its own Octave. The Church regards each day in an Octave as if it were the solemnity itself. So for example, the prayers for Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours during the Christmas Octave refer to each day as if it were still Christmas Day. Despite having days within the Octave that are feasts: St Stephen, St John the Evangelist, the Holy Innocents and the Holy Family, and the concluding Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God, each of these days is as the Roman Missal states, a "day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord." This means that, liturgically, each of the days from 25th December to the 1st January is 'Christmas Day'. It is appropriate therefore, that families have the opportunity to enter into the mystery of the Incarnation and give their praise and blessing to God at the Crib.



Wall mural of the Crib, Assisi, Italy.

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
And the Word became flesh
and dwelt among us,
and we have seen his glory,
glory as of the only Son
from the Father,
full of grace and truth.

John 1:1,14

A short family service for each day of the Octave is provided here for your use beginning on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day with a blessing of the crib.



DAY ONE Christmas Eve Evening / Christmas Day Morning.

The Family gather at the Nativity scene (Crib) to bless and praise God for sending his Son Jesus; and a candle is lit, representing Christ the Light who has come into world.

Leader: Glory to God in the highest.

All: And peace to God's people on earth.

Leader: Let us listen to these words from the Gospel of St. Luke.

Reader: While Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her first born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and lay him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angels a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace among those with whom he is pleased!" When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and seeing this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning the child.'

Luke 2:6-17 (ESV/CE)

One of the children places into the Nativity scene the '*bambino*', the infant Jesus.
All sing this verse or one from another carol that everybody knows.

Come, come, come to the manger,
Children, come to the children's king;
Sing, sing, chorus of angels,
Star of morning o'er Bethlehem sing.

PRAYER OF BLESSING OF THE CRIB:

Leader:

God of every nation and people,
from the very beginning of creation
you have shown your love:
when our need for a Saviour was great
you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary.
to our lives he brings joy and peace,
justice, mercy and love.
Lord, bless all who look upon this manger;
may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus,
and raise up our thoughts to him,
who is God-with-us and Saviour of all,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.



LITANY OF PRAISE:

Leader:

Let us praise our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, who was born for our salvation. With the Angels every one proclaims: **R.** Glory to God in the highest.

Readers - different family members each taking an acclamation in turn:

Everlasting Son of God
you are the fullness of the Father's glory. **R.**
Lord Jesus,
you are Son of God and Son of Mary. **R.**
Word made flesh,
You have made us children of the father. **R.**
Lord Jesus,
you are the revelation of the Father's love. **R.**
Word of God,
you have come and shared our life. **R.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER - Our Father, who art in heaven ...

INTERCESSIONS:

Leader:

As we ask for God's blessings upon our family gathered around this Christmas manger, we remember that the birth of the Lord Jesus was to fulfil the Father's will, that all people will know his Son and be saved.

And so we pray together with the words: **R.** Come Lord, dwell within us.

Readers - different family members each taking a prayer intention in turn:

For the Church – that we may always proclaim God's gift of new life for all people. **R.**

For all the children born this Christmas time – that they may have health and bring joy to their parents and families. **R.**

For our families, especially those unable to gather together because of COVID - that they may find their faith and hope in Jesus unites them in the Father's unending love. **R.**

For peace in the world, especially the land of Jesus' birth – that the angels' message of peace may be made a reality for all, by the forgiveness and good will we give from our hearts. **R.**

PRAYER:

Leader:

Almighty God,
Your Son made man fills us with the new light he brought to all people.
Let the light of faith in our hearts shine through all that we do and say.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.
Amen.

BLESSING:

Each signing himself or herself with the sign of the cross saying:

May Christ our God enlighten our hearts and minds, this Christmas and for ever.
Amen.



DAY TWO in the Octave of Christmas – Saint Stephen, the First Martyr (Saturday 26th December).

Stephen is the first martyr. He was one of the seven appointed deacons by the Apostles to see to the distribution of food to the poor, a sort of early Christian food bank. (Acts.6:1-8) He performed many miracles and was often found preaching and in dispute with the Jews, who made up false charges against him. At his trial, he preached the risen Christ and this almost certainly sealed his death sentence by stoning. As he died he prayed for his persecutors among whom was Saul of Tarsus, (Acts 7:54 - 8:1) who was yet to have his conversion to Christianity and to become the great missionary, St. Paul.

The Family gather at the Nativity scene and the candle is lit.

Leader: All the end so the earth have seen.

All: the saving power of God.

Leader: Let us listen to these words from the Gospel of St. Luke.

Reader: And when the [shepherds] made known the saying that had been told them concerning the child, all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Luke 2:18-20 (ESV/CE)

All sing this verse or one from another carol that everybody knows.

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down,
and glory shone around.

LITANY OF PRAISE:

Leader:

Let us praise our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, who was born for our salvation. With the Angels every one proclaims: **R.** Glory to God in the highest.

Readers - different family members each taking an acclamation in turn:

Son of God made man,
you have united heaven and earth. **R.**
Eternal Son,
You are the light of the nations. **R.**
Lord Jesus,
you have revealed the Father's love for all people. **R.**
Son of David
the shepherds came to worship you. **R.**
Jesus, living word of the Father,
you are the one who proclaims the Good News. **R.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER - Our Father, who art in heaven ...



INTERCESSIONS:

Leader:

As we ask for God's blessings upon our family gathered around this Christmas manger, we remember the birth of the Lord Jesus was to fulfil the Father's will that all people know his Son and be saved.

And so we pray together with the words: **R.** Come, Lord dwell within us.

Readers - different family members each taking a prayer intention in turn:

For the Church throughout the world – as we celebrate the birth of our Saviour with different customs may we be united in his love. **R.**

For those Christians unable to celebrate Christmas because of conflict or persecution – in their hearts may they enjoy the joy and peace of the infant king. **R.**

For those who are sick, especially those in hospitals or are cut off from their families due to coronavirus isolation – may they find comfort in Christ. **R.**

For all the peoples of the world – may the angels' song of peace and goodwill be heard by the men, women and children of every nation, tribe and religion. **R.**

PRAYER:

Leader:

On this feast of Saint Stephen, grant we pray O Lord,
that we may imitate what we worship
and so learn to love our enemies as Jesus has taught us,
for we celebrate the heavenly birthday
of a man who knew how to pray even for his persecutors.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.
Amen.

BLESSING:

Each signing himself or herself with sign of the cross saying:

May Christ our God enlighten our hearts and minds, this Christmas and for ever.
Amen.



DAY THREE in the Octave of Christmas – The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph (Sunday 27th December).

The Family gather at the Nativity scene and the candle is lit.

Leader: Glory to God in the highest.
All: And peace to God's people on earth.

Leader: Let us listen to these words from the Gospel of St. Matthew:

Reader: Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame resolved to send her away quietly. But as he considered these things behold an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which she has conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:
"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel"
(which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.
Matthew 1:18-25 (ESV/CE)

All sing this verse or one from another carol that everybody knows.

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

LITANY OF PRAISE:

Leader:
Let us praise our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, who was born for our salvation. With the Angels every one proclaims: **R.** Glory to God in the highest.

Readers - different family members each taking an acclamation in turn:

Emmanuel,
you are the fullness of God's glory. **R.**
Son of God,
you were born of Mary with Joseph as your protector. **R.**
Eternal Word,
you have scattered the darkness of sin and death. **R.**
Jesus prophet of the Kingdom,
you are the fulfilment of the Law and of the new Covenant. **R.**
Jesus, Light from eternal Light,
you are the first and the last. **R.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER - Our Father, who art in heaven ...



INTERCESSIONS:

Leader:

As we ask for God's blessings upon our family gathered around this Christmas manger, we remember the birth of the Lord Jesus was to fulfil the Father's will that all people know his Son and be saved.

And so we pray together with the words: **R.** Come, Lord dwell within us.

Readers - different family members each taking a prayer intention in turn:

For the Church – as we rejoice with Mary and Joseph in the birth of the Christ-child, may we welcome Christ into our lives as they did so faithfully. **R.**

For the whole of the family of the Church – that we may speak words of peace, perform deeds of love, forgive as we have been forgiven, and love in harmony with each other. **R.**

For our own families – that rising above differences of age and outlook, we may respect the dignity of each and learn to be patient with, and understanding of, one another. **R.**

For families who grieve at this time due to the death of a loved one through COVID – that they may know comfort in the promises of Jesus and the prayers of Mary and Joseph. **R.**

For Governments and world leaders – that they may always respect the rights of families, and the value and dignity of human life at all ages. **R.**

PRAYER:

Leader:

God our Father, in the Holy Family of Nazareth
you have given us the true model of a Christian home.
Grant that by following Jesus, Mary and Joseph
in their love for each other and in the example of their family life,
we may come to your home of peace and joy.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

BLESSING:

Each signing himself or herself with sign of the cross saying:

May Christ our God enlighten our hearts and minds, this Christmas and for ever.
Amen.



DAY FOUR in the Octave of Christmas – The Holy Innocents (Mon. 28th December).

The Holy Innocents are the children who were slaughtered at the orders of King Herod, in the hope that by killing every boy infant in Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth, he would succeed in killing him too, as Herod could not accept the idea of the King of the Jews in opposition to him. (Matthew 2:1-18).

The Family gather at the Nativity scene and the candle is lit.

Leader: All the end so the earth have seen.

All: the saving power of God.

Leader: Let us listen to these words from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

Reader: Now when the wise men had departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Then Herod when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he ascertained from the wise men. This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet, Jeremiah:

A voice was heard in Ramah,

Weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children;

She refused to be comforted, because they are no more.

Matthew 2:13-18 (ESV/CE)

All sing this verse or one from another carol that everybody knows.

Hark, the herald-angels sing, glory to the new-born King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled:
joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies,
with th'angelic host proclaim, 'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'
Hark the herald-angels sing, glory to the new born King.

LITANY OF PRAISE:

Leader:

Let us praise our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, who was born for our salvation. With the Angels every one proclaims: **R.** Glory to God in the highest.

Readers - different family members each taking an acclamation in turn:

Jesus, Word that saves,

you are the homeland of the exile and the refugee. **R.**

Redeemer of humanity,

you are the hope and mercy of sinners. **R.**

Jesus, King of kings and Lord of lords,

you are the defence of the offended and justice for the oppressed. **R.**

Jesus, first born of the new creation,

you are resurrection and life. **R.**

Wonder counsellor,

you are the source of divine wisdom. **R.**



THE LORD'S PRAYER - Our Father, who art in heaven ...

INTERCESSIONS:

Leader:

As we ask for God's blessings upon our family gathered around this Christmas manger, we remember the birth of the Lord Jesus was to fulfil the Father's will that all people know his Son and be saved.

And so we pray together with the words: **R.** Come, Lord dwell within us.

Readers - different family members each taking a prayer intention in turn:

For the Church in our country – that we may speak words of peace, perform deeds of love, forgive as we have been forgiven, and love in harmony with each other. **R.**

For the victims of abuse, for whom we all have responsibility – that we will all acknowledge the sins of those in the past and work to prevent further crimes against children and the vulnerable. **R.**

For the child victims of war, terrorism and conflict – that we will work to restore to these young lives the joy, trust and hope of childhood. **R.**

For those who provide healthcare to children, especially those suffering through COVID – that they may have the awareness of caring for the Christ-child, in that what you did to the least of these you did for me. **R.**

PRAYER:

Leader:

O God, the Holy Innocents confessed Jesus and proclaimed him this day, not by speaking but by dying.

Grant, we pray, that the faith in you we confess with our lips may also speak through our manner of life.

Through our Lord, Jesus Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.
Amen.

BLESSING:

Each signing himself or herself with sign of the cross saying:

May Christ our God enlighten our hearts and minds, this Christmas and for ever.
Amen.



DAY FIVE in the Octave of Christmas (Tuesday 29th December).

The Family gather at the Nativity scene and the candle is lit.

Leader: Glory to God in the highest.
All: And peace to God's people on earth.

Leader: Let us listen to these words from the Gospel of St. Luke:

Reader: And when the time came [for the purification of Mary and Joseph] according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male child who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer in sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all people. A light for the revelation to the Gentiles, and for the glory of your people Israel." And his father and his mother marvelled at what was said about him.'

Luke 2:22-32 (ESV/CE)

All sing this verse or one from another carol that everybody knows.

Silent night, holy night. All is calm, all is bright,
round yon virgin mother and child; holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

LITANY OF PRAISE:

Leader: Let us praise our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, who was born for our salvation. With the Angels every one proclaims: **R.** Glory to God in the highest.

Readers - different family members each taking an acclamation in turn:

Jesus, Light from eternal Light,
you are revelation to the nations. **R.**
Jesus, radiant Morning Star.
you are glory of your people Israel. **R.**
Jesus, uncreated beauty,
you are giver of life and Divine Wisdom. **R.**
Jesus, dawn of the new humanity,
you are our brother and friend. **R.**
Jesus, day without sunset,
you are the spouse of the Church. **R.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER - Our Father, who art in heaven ...



INTERCESSIONS:

Leader:

As we ask for God's blessings upon our family gathered around this Christmas manger, we remember the birth of the Lord Jesus was to fulfil the Father's will that all people know his Son and be saved.

And so we pray together with the words: **R.** Come, Lord dwell within us.

Readers - different family members each taking a prayer intention in turn:

For the Church – that she may always be open to the workings of the Spirit in our midst. **R.**

For the elderly, especially those of our families – that they may know the fulfilment of their hopes for this life and be serene in their preparations for the Lord's coming. **R.**

For those who are fearful because of COVID – that the faith of the community and our care may be their comfort and strength. **R.**

For the progress and peace of the whole world – that in the giving of gifts and sharing of an abundance of food, we may always remember those who lack even the necessities for life, and treat them with justice and generosity. **R.**

PRAYER:

Leader:

Almighty and unseen God,
who dispersed the darkness of this world by the coming of your light,
look we pray, with serene countenance upon us,
that we may acclaim with fitting praise
the greatness of the Nativity of your Only Begotten Son.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.
Amen.

BLESSING:

Each signing himself or herself with sign of the cross saying:

May Christ our God enlighten our hearts and minds, this Christmas and for ever.
Amen.



DAY SIX in the Octave of Christmas (Wednesday 30th December).

The Family gather at the Nativity scene and the candle is lit.

Leader: All the end so the earth have seen.
All: the saving power of God.

Leader: Let us listen to these words from the Gospel of St. Luke.

Reader: And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Luke 2:36-38 (ESV/CE)

All sing this verse or one from another carol that everybody knows.

Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed;
Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little child.

LITANY OF PRAISE:

Leader:
Let us praise our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, who was born for our salvation. With the Angels every one proclaims: **R.** Glory to God in the highest.

Readers - different family members each taking an acclamation in turn:

Jesus, gift of the Father,
you are son of Adam and descendent of Abraham. **R.**
Jesus, revealed to shepherds,
you are born for our salvation. **R.**
Jesus, glory of Israel your people,
you are fulfilment of all people's hope. **R.**
Jesus, light of the Gentiles
you are the destiny of all human beings. **R.**
Jesus, fullness of the Law
you are the teacher of truth. **R.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER - Our Father, who art in heaven ...

INTERCESSIONS:

Leader:
As we ask for God's blessings upon our family gathered around this Christmas manger, we remember the birth of the Lord Jesus was to fulfil the Father's will that all people know his Son and be saved.
And so we pray together with the words: **R.** Come, Lord dwell within us.



Readers - different family members each taking a prayer intention in turn:

For the Church – that we may always be purified by fasting, prayer and almsgiving for the service of the Lord. **R.**

For grandparents, especially those with whom we have been unable to share Christmas this year – that they may know the presence of Jesus with them through the gift of their lives in humble service. **R.**

For all who are waiting for the gift of healing through Coronavirus – that the roll out of vaccines may strengthen their endurance and patience for a new beginning. **R.**

For all who are widowed and grieve the loss of their spouse – that they may be blessed and comforted by the presence of Jesus and the prayer of the Church. **R.**

PRAYER:

Leader:

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that the freshness of the Birth in the flesh of your Only Begotten Son -
that we profess with devotion and faith,
may set us free from the ancient enemy of sin and death,
and make us free to receive the gift of Life himself.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.
Amen.

BLESSING:

Each signing himself or herself with sign of the cross saying:

May Christ our God enlighten our hearts and minds, this Christmas and for ever.
Amen.



DAY SEVEN in the Octave of Christmas (Thursday 31st December).

The Family gather at the Nativity scene and the candle is lit.

Leader: Glory to God in the highest.
All: And peace to God's people on earth.

Leader: Let us listen to these words from the Gospel of St. Matthew:

Reader: Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

*And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
Are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
For from you shall come a ruler
Who will shepherd my people Israel."*

Then Herod summoned the wise men and secretly ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Matthew 2:1-11 (ESV/CE)

All sing this verse or one from another carol that everybody knows.

And by the light of that same star,
three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel!

LITANY OF PRAISE:

Leader: Let us praise our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, who was born for our salvation. With the Angels every one proclaims: **R.** Glory to God in the highest.

Readers - different family members each taking an acclamation in turn:

Jesus, made manifest to the magi,
you are priest and King and victim. **R.**
Jesus, radiant Morning Star,
you are gentle and humble. **R.**
Jesus, Lord of history,
you are our journey and goal. **R.**
Jesus, true King of glory
you are universal judge. **R.**
Jesus, redeemer of humanity,
you are our guide and advocate. **R.**



THE LORD'S PRAYER - Our Father, who art in heaven ...

INTERCESSIONS:

Leader:

As we ask for God's blessings upon our family gathered around this Christmas manger, we remember the birth of the Lord Jesus was to fulfil the Father's will that all people know his Son and be saved.

And so we pray together with the words: **R.** Come, Lord dwell within us.

Readers - different family members each taking a prayer intention in turn:

For the Church – for Pope Francis and all the Bishops, priests and deacons, may they exercise authority in humble service of him who came not to be served, but to serve. **R.**

For kings and queens, rulers and governments – that they use their power for the good of their citizens with integrity, peace, liberty and respect for the dignity of all. **R.**

For those who care for the vulnerable, disabled and sick, especially those made so by COVID – that they may find new health, strength and compassion in their lives. **R.**

For those who are oppressed, offended and weak - that as Jesus stood by those who suffered, and were rejected, that we may give them a voice and new hope. **R.**

PRAYER:

Leader:

May your people, O Lord,
whom you guide and sustain in many ways,
experience both now and in the future all of the caring love that you give,
that, with the healing compassion that you give in things that pass away, they may strive
with ever deeper trust for the things that are eternal.

Through our Lord, Jesus Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.
Amen.

BLESSING:

Each signing himself or herself with sign of the cross saying:

May Christ our God enlighten our hearts and minds, this Christmas and for ever.

Amen.



DAY EIGHT in the Octave of Christmas – Mary, the Mother of God.

The Family gather at the Nativity scene and the candle is lit.

Leader: All the end so the earth have seen.
All: the saving power of God.

Leader: Let us listen to these words from the Gospel of St. Luke

Reader: And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”
Luke 2:22-24 (ESV/CE)

All sing this verse or one from another carol that everybody knows.

God of God,
Light of Light,
lo he abhors not the Virgin’s womb;
very God, begotten not created:
O Come, let us adore him,
O Come, let us adore him,
O Come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.

LITANY OF PRAISE:

Leader:
Let us praise our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, who was born for our salvation. With the Angels every one proclaims: **R.** Glory to God in the highest.

Readers - different family members each taking an acclamation in turn:

Jesus, Son of God and Mary,
you teach us the meaning of obedience and humility. **R.**
Jesus, servant of the Lord
you show us the meaning of compassion. **R.**
Jesus, Light of the world,
yours is the light that conquers the darkness for ever. **R.**
Jesus, true vine of the Father,
in you we are the branches that bear the fruits of your love. **R.**
Jesus, man of sorrows,
yours is the suffering that brings reconciliation. **R.**

THE LORD’S PRAYER - Our Father, who art in heaven ...

INTERCESSIONS:

Leader:
As we ask for God’s blessings upon our family gathered around this Christmas manger, we remember the birth of the Lord Jesus was to fulfil the Father’s will that all people know his Son and be saved.
And so we pray together with the words: **R.** Come, Lord dwell within us.



Readers - different family members each taking a prayer intention in turn:

For the Church – that following the example of Mary, model of faith, we may meditate on the word of God and treasure it in our hearts. **R.**

For all children – may they be given that protection and care that is their due in family life and society, enabling them to achieve their full potential as children of God in the world. **R.**

For those who are widowed or orphaned through the death of a parent, especially those affected by Coronavirus – that in their suffering they may always know the protection of the Father's love as he gave his beloved Son for us. **R.**

For the entire human race, proud of its achievements in discovery and invention, especially of vaccines and medicines - that scientific and technical conquests may not diminish its faith in God the creator of the marvels of the universe. **R.**

PRAYER:

Leader:

O God, who in your kindness begin all good things,
and bring them to fulfilment,
grant to us, who find joy in the celebration of the holy Mother of God,
that, just as we glory in the beginnings of your grace,
so one day we may rejoice in its completion.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God without end.
Amen.

BLESSING:

Each signing himself or herself with sign of the cross saying:

May Christ our God enlighten our hearts and minds, this Christmas and for ever.
Amen.