

Prayer at the Crib

Suggestions for use

The Crib can be used as a focus for personal and family prayer online. Printed out, and either laminated or framed, this resource can also be used for prayer during private visits to the church.

The resource could also form the basis for online liturgies during the Christmas season with the addition of some of the music suggestions.

If we can have congregations present in our churches this resource could be used as a prayer service.

Prayer at the Crib

Introduction

In 1223, at Greccio in Italy, St. Francis of Assisi gave us the crib as a reminder of the beauty of the first Christmas Night. He used real people and animals in his first crib. Ever since then many people have placed cribs in their homes and most churches have a crib. The crib can be used as a wonderful focus for prayer either at home or in the church during this time of pandemic.

A simple place, usually a safe shelter for animals and storage for goods, fit for the birth of the Son of God. The great lesson we learn from the crib is that the Good News is for all people, not just the rich, the powerful, the strong, nor the poor, the weak, the powerless but for all people. Everyone was welcome at the crib, everyone is welcome in the presence of God.

Scripture Passage

Luke 2: 1 – 5

Now at this time Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census, the first, took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from his own town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn.

Prayer

Dear God, bless this crib.

Your presence and love are at work in the strangest of places and in the ordinary parts of our lives. This Christmas may we place you at the centre of our celebration, at the centre of our hearts, the centre of our hearts. May what we do and say in the next few weeks remind others of you. Amen.

Music Suggestions:

- Wood of the Cradle (Gather)
 - Once in Royal David's City (Veritas & 100 Carols for Choirs)
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The Animals

Introduction

Everyone has something to give, we may feel that we do not have much to offer God or to others, but we are all gifts to each other. All the animals could give Jesus was the warmth of their breath, this was very important to a newborn baby on a cold night. The great lesson we can learn from the animals is that no gift is too small when it is given with love.

Scripture Passage

(The animals are not featured in the New Testament accounts of the Nativity, however there is the following quote from the Old Testament.)

“The ox knows its owner and the ass its master’s crib.” Isaiah 1:3

Prayer

Lord, we remember the animals
who are part of the Christmas story:
they remind us that you have entrusted us
with the care of your creation.
Keep us to respect, protect and cherish
the earth, your wondrous gift to us.
Amen

Music suggestions:

- Away in a Manger (Veritas & 100 Carols for Choirs)
 - Come to the Manger (Hymns Old and New)
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The Shepherds

Introduction

Often, we leave others out of our circle of friends and society sometimes pushes people to the side. The shepherds were on the outside of life looking in, people looked down on them because they were smelly and lived with the sheep. God chose these very people to be the first to hear the good News. The great lesson that we learn from the shepherds is that all people are lovable and need-love.

Scripture Passage

Luke 2: 8 – 12, 15 – 16.

In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turns to watch their flocks during the night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified, but the angel said, “Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of a great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Now when the angels had gone from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us”. So they hurried away and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.

Prayer

Like a shepherd, the Lord leads us.
Lord, give each of us and those we love your tender care.
Help us to be like shepherds leading others to you. Amen.

Music suggestions:

- While Shepherds Watched (Veritas & 100 Carols for Choirs)
 - Like a Shepherd (Bob Dufford)
 - God is Love (Veritas)
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The Angels

Introduction

Every single day we get hundreds of messages, for example, from ads on TV and the radio, ads in the papers and in magazines. Texts and e-mails from friends. The great lesson that we learn from the angels is that God also sends us messages, but we need to listen carefully to hear them.

Scripture Passage

Luke 2: 10 – 14, 17 – 19.

And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing:

“Glory to God in the highest heaven
and peace to men who enjoy his favour.”

When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds had to say. As for Mary, she treasured these things in her heart.

Prayer

Dear God,
My world is terribly busy and sometimes very loud.
Over the next few weeks help me to make time
that I may hear you speaking to me. Amen.

Music suggestions:

- Angels we have heard (Veritas Hymnal)
 - The Angel Gabriel (100 Carols for Choirs)
 - Word of God come down on Earth
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Joseph

Introduction

Joseph was very confused when he discovered that Mary was pregnant. At first, he thought only about himself then, with God' help, he thought about Mary. The great lesson that we can learn from St. Joseph is not to be self-centred but to always think of the needs of others.

Scripture Reading

Matthew 1: 18—20

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to share her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus because he is the one to save his people.

Prayer

Dear God,
Thank you for the example of St. Joseph.
Help me to see the needs of others before my own
and by my friendship let me help them.
make me sensitive and loving. Amen.

Music suggestions:

- Make Me a Channel of Your Peace (Hymns Old and New Liturgical)
 - Where Charity and Love are there is God (In Caelo)
 - Ubi Caritas (In Caelo)
 - Lord of all Hopefulness (Veritas Hymnal)
 - Joseph was an Honest Man (Hymns Old and New, Children's Section)
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Mary

Introduction

Mary was a young girl who was asked by God to do something extraordinary, to become the mother of his Son, Jesus. This was not an easy request, but Mary took her courage in her hands and said, "Yes". The great lesson that we can learn from Mary is that we can all do what God asks of us, even when it seems difficult.

Scripture Passage

Luke 1:26 – 36, 38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, "Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you" She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, "Mary do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end." Mary said to the angel, "But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?" "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" the angel answered "and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God." "I am the handmaid of the Lord," said Mary "let what you have said be done to me." And the angel left her.

Prayer

Dear God,
Give us the courage to be like Mary,
willing to do all we can to make God
present among our families and friends. Amen

Music suggestions:

- Lourdes Magnificat (Allelui Amen)
 - Dominican Magnificat (In Caelo)
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Jesus

Introduction

St. John tells us that God loved the world so much that he sent us his Son, Jesus who the Christ, the Word made Flesh. Christmas invites us to allow the Word of God to born again in and through us. May the wonder of the Incarnation open our hearts and ears to what Jesus has to say to us throughout the year.

Scripture Passage John 1: 1 – 5, 14

In the beginning was the Word:

the word was with God

and the word was God.

He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things came to be.

not one thing had it being but through him.

all that came to be had life in him

and that light was the light of men,

a light that shines in the dark,

a light that darkness could not overpower.

The Word was made flesh,

he lived among us,

and we saw his glory,

the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father,

full of grace and truth.

Prayer

O God, You gladden our hearts each year

by our celebration of Christmas.

Fill us with the joy that comes

from knowing the depth of your love. Amen.

Music suggestions:

- Joy to the World (100 Carols for Choirs)
 - O' Come all ye Fatihful (Veritas & 100 Carols for Choirs)
 - Ding Dong merrily on High (Hymns Old and New Liturgical & 100 Carols for Choirs)
 - God So Loved the World (Stainer)
 - The Sacred Child (In Caelo)
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