



FAMILY CHRISTMAS PRAYERS

Blessing of Christmas Manger or Nativity Scene,
Christmas Tree and “Parol”



ORDER FOR THE BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS MANGER OR NATIVITY SCENE

In its present form the custom of displaying figures depicting the birth of Jesus Christ owes its origin to Saint Francis of Assisi who made the Christmas crèche or manger for Christmas eve of 1223.

However, as early as the fourth century representations of the nativity of the Lord were painted 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.

The blessing of the Christmas manger or nativity scene, according to pastoral circumstances, may take place on the Vigil of Christmas or at another more suitable time.

The blessing may be given during a celebration of the word of God, during Mass, or even during another service, e.g., a carol service.

When the manger is set up in the home, it is appropriate that it be blessed by a parent or another family member; the shorter rite may be used for this purpose.

A form of this rite is also found in Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers.

The blessing may be given by a priest, deacon, or a lay minister.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

When the members of the family have gathered, a suitable song may be sung. After the singing, the head of the family says:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All make the sign of the cross and respond:
Amen.

The head of the family greets those present in the following words:

Praised be Jesus Christ, who dwells among us, now and forever.

All:
Amen.

In the following or similar words, the head of the family prepares those present for the blessing.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, we pause to bless this Christmas manger scene. The practice of erecting such mangers was begun by Saint Francis of Assisi as a means to set forth the message of Christmas. When we look upon these figures, the Christmas gospel comes alive and we are moved to rejoice in the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God.

READING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Luke 2:1-8

A member of the family reads a text of sacred Scripture.

Brothers and sisters, let us listen to the reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke:

The birth of Jesus.

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled 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 her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock.

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ

INTERCESSIONS

The head of the family says:

Let us ask for God's blessing on this Christmas manger and upon ourselves, that we who reflect on the birth of Jesus may share in the salvation he accomplished.

All:

Come, Lord, dwell with us.

A member of the family:

For the Church of God, as we recall the circumstances surrounding the birth of Christ, that we may always proclaim his gift of new life for all people, we pray to the Lord. R.

For the world in which we live, that it may come to recognize Christ who was greeted by the angels and shepherds, we pray to the Lord. R.

For our families and our homes, that Christ who was laid in the manger may dwell with us always, we pray to the Lord. R.

For parents, that their love for their children may be modeled on that of the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, we pray to the Lord. R.

After the intercessions the head of the family, in the following or similar words, invites all present to sing or say the “Lord’s Prayer”.

At the Savior’s command and formed by divine teaching we dare to say:

All:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed by thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

PRAYER OF BLESSING

The head of the family says the prayer with hands joined.

God of every nation and people,
from the very beginning of creation
you have made manifest your love:
when our need for a Savior 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 Savior of all,
and who lives and reigns
forever and ever.

All:

Amen.

CONCLUDING RITE

The head of the family concludes the rite by signing himself or herself with the sign of the cross and saying:

May almighty God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and protect us.

All:

Amen.

It is preferable to end the celebration with a suitable song.



ORDER FOR THE BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS TREE

The use of the Christmas tree is relatively modern. Its origins are found in the medieval mystery plays which depicted the tree of paradise and the Christmas light or candle which symbolized Christ, the Light of the world.

According to custom, the Christmas tree is set up just before Christmas and may remain in place until the solemnity of Epiphany. Although the primary place for the Christmas tree is the home, at times one or more may also be placed in the church. In such a case, the decoration of the trees should be appropriate to their use in the church, and care should be taken that they do not interfere with the requirements of the liturgical space.

The Christmas tree may be blessed on or before Christmas during a celebration of the word of God, or during Morning or Evening Prayer.

If the blessing is celebrated during Morning or Evening Prayer, it takes place after the gospel canticle. The intercessions, Lord's Prayer, and prayer of blessing replace the intercessions and concluding prayer of Morning or Evening Prayer.

The lights of the tree are illuminated after the prayer of blessing.

In the home the Christmas tree may be blessed by a parent or another family member, in connection with the evening meal on the Vigil of Christmas or at another suitable time on Christmas Day; the shorter rite may be used for this purpose.

These orders may be used by a priest or a deacon, and also by a layperson, who follows the rites and prayers designated for a lay minister.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

When the members of the family have gathered, a suitable song may be sung. After the singing, the head of the family says:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All make the sign of the cross and respond:
Amen.

The head of the family greets those present in the following words:

Let us glorify Christ our light, who brings salvation and peace into our midst, now and for ever.

All:
Amen.

In the following or similar words, the head of the family prepares those present for the blessing.

My brothers and sisters, amidst signs and wonders Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea: his birth brings joy to our hearts and enlightenment to our minds. With this tree, decorated and adorned, may we welcome Christ among us; may its lights guide us to the perfect light.

READING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Titus 3:4-7

A member of the family reads a text of sacred Scripture.

Brothers and sisters, let us listen to the words of the apostle Paul to Titus:

His own compassion saved us.

But when the kindness and generous love of God our savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

The Word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God

INTERCESSIONS

The head of the family says:

Let us ask God to send his blessing upon us and upon this sign of our faith in the Lord.

All:

Lord, give light to our hearts.

A member of the family:

That the Church may always reflect the joy of Jesus Christ who enlightens our hearts, we pray to the Lord. R.

That this tree of lights may remind us of the tree of glory on which Christ accomplished our salvation, we pray to the Lord. R.

That the joy of Christmas may always be in our homes, we pray to the Lord. R.

That the peace of Christ may dwell in our hearts and in the world, we pray to the Lord. R.

After the intercessions the head of the family, in the following or similar words, invites all present to sing or say the "Lord's Prayer".

With confident faith let us pray as Christ taught us:

All:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed by thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

PRAYER OF BLESSING

The head of the family says the prayer with hands joined.

**Holy Lord,
we come with joy
to celebrate the birth of your Son,
who rescued us from the darkness of sin
by making the cross
a tree of life and light.**

**May this tree, arrayed in splendor,
remind us
of the life-giving cross of Christ,
that we may always rejoice
in the new life that shines in our hearts.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.**

All:

Amen.

The candles or lights of the tree are then illuminated.

During the illumination of the tree, a member of the family leads in singing the following acclamations to Christ, or some other suitable hymn, such as “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.”

Lord Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary.

R. We welcome you, O Lord.

Lord Jesus, hope of the shepherds and the poor.

R. We welcome you, O Lord.

Lord Jesus, glory of the angels.

R. We welcome you, O Lord.

CONCLUDING RITE

The head of the family concludes the rite by signing himself or herself with the sign of the cross and saying:

May the God of glory fill our hearts with peace and joy, now and for ever.

All:

Amen.

It is preferable to end the celebration with a suitable song.



ORDER FOR THE BLESSING OF A "PAROL"

INTRODUCTORY RITES

When the members of the family have gathered, a suitable song may be sung. After the singing, the head of the family says:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All make the sign of the cross and respond:
Amen.

The head of the family greets those present in the following words:

Let us glorify Christ our light, who brings salvation and peace into our midst, now and for ever.

All:
Amen.

In the following or similar words, the head of the family prepares those present for the blessing.

My brothers and sisters, amidst signs and wonders Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea: his birth brings joy to our hearts and enlightenment to our minds. With this star, adorned and lighted, may we welcome Christ among us; may its lights guide us to the perfect light.

READING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Matthew 2:1-12

A member of the family proclaims a text of sacred Scripture.

Brothers and sisters, let us listen to the reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew:

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet:

And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel."

Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child

was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ

INTERCESSIONS

The head of the family says:

Let us ask God to send his blessing upon us and upon this sign of our faith in the Lord.

All:

Lord, give light to our hearts.

A member of the family:

That the Church may always reflect the joy of Jesus Christ who enlightens our hearts, we pray to the Lord. R.

That the light of this “parol” may remind us of the light of Christ and our call to be children of the light, we pray to the Lord. R.

That the joy of Christmas may always be in our homes, we pray to the Lord. R.

That the peace of Christ may dwell in our hearts and in the world, we pray to the Lord. R.

After the intercessions the head of the family, in the following or similar words, invites all present to sing or say the “Lord’s Prayer”.

With confident faith let us pray as Christ taught us:

All:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed by thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

PRAYER OF BLESSING

The head of the family says the prayer with hands joined.

O God,
who revealed your Only Begotten Son
to the nations
by the guidance of a star,
grant in your mercy,
that we, who know you already by faith,
may be brought to behold
the beauty of your sublime glory.

Let your blessing come upon us
as we illumine this “parol”.

May the light and joy it gives
remind us that we must always walk
as children of the light.

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.

All:
Amen.

CONCLUDING RITE

The head of the family concludes the rite by signing himself or herself with the sign of the cross and saying:

**May the God of glory fill our hearts with
peace and joy, now and for ever.**

All:
Amen.

It is preferable to end the celebration with a suitable song.



Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission
Manila