

THE CHURCH OF ST FRANCIS

Christmas 2020



**May the Peace of the
Christ Child be yours
this Christmas and always**



**With Love and Every Blessing
for Christmas and the New Year**

PRAYERS FOR CHRISTMAS NIGHT



Eternal God,
who made this most holy night
to shine with the brightness
of your one true light: bring us,
who have known the revelation
of that light on earth,
to see the radiance
of your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ
your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Eternal God,
in the stillness of this night
you sent your almighty Word
to pierce the world's darkness
with the light of salvation:
give to the earth
the peace that we long for
and fill our hearts
with the joy of heaven
through our Saviour,
Jesus Christ. Amen

God our Father,
in this night
you have made known to us again
the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:
confirm our faith
and fix our eyes on him
until the day dawns
and Christ the Morning Star
rises in our hearts.
To him be glory
both now and for ever. Amen

PRAYERS FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

Almighty God,
you have given us
your only-begotten Son
to take our nature upon him
and as at this time to be born
of a pure virgin:
grant that we,
who have been born again
and made your children
by adoption and grace,
may daily be renewed
by your Holy Spirit;
through Jesus Christ
your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Lord Jesus Christ,
your birth at Bethlehem
draws us to kneel in wonder
at heaven touching earth:
accept our heartfelt praise
as we worship you,
our Saviour and our eternal God. Amen

God our Father,
whose Word has come among us
in the Holy Child of Bethlehem:
may the light of faith
illumine our hearts
and shine in our words and deeds;
through him who is Christ the Lord. Amen



ISAIAH 52: 7 - 10

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who
announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'

Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,
together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
the return of the Lord to Zion.

Break forth together into singing,
you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the Lord has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

The Lord has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.



PSALM 98

- 1 Sing to the Lord a new song, ♦
for he has done marvellous things.
- 2 His own right hand and his holy arm ♦
have won for him the victory.
- 3 The Lord has made known his salvation; ♦
his deliverance has he openly shown in the
sight of the nations.
- 4 He has remembered his mercy and
faithfulness
towards the house of Israel, ♦
and all the ends of the earth have seen the
salvation of our God.
- 5 Sound praises to the Lord, all the earth; ♦
break into singing and make music.

6 Make music to the Lord with the lyre, ♦
with the lyre and the voice of melody.

7 With trumpets and the sound of the horn ♦
sound praises before the Lord, the King.

8 Let the sea thunder and all that fills it, ♦
the world and all that dwell upon it.

9 Let the rivers clap their hands ♦
and let the hills ring out together before the
Lord,
for he comes to judge the earth.

10 In righteousness shall he judge the world ♦
and the peoples with equity.



HEBREWS 1: 1 - 4

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many
and various ways by the prophets, but in these
last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom
he appointed heir of all things, through whom
he also created the worlds.

He is the reflection of God's glory and the
exact imprint of God's very being, and he
sustains all things by his powerful word.

When he had made purification for sins, he sat
down at the right hand of the Majesty on
high, having become as much superior to
angels as the name he has inherited is more
excellent than theirs.

JOHN 1: 1 - 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.



JOURNEYING TO SEE THE BABE

To love another person is to see the face of God [Victor Hugo]

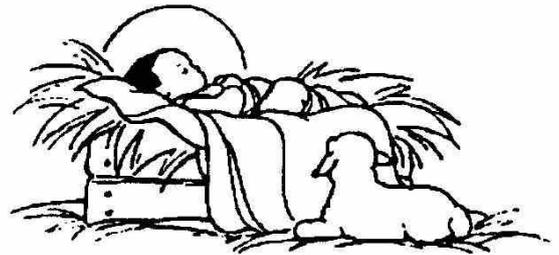
I have a favourite Christmas prayer that I would like to share with you. It's an ancient prayer, and one that touches me deeply – it speaks of the mystery and the wonder of the Christ Child.

The tiny vulnerable one who came among us that we might understand that any one of us can approach God and gaze upon his face.

His face of love that is turned toward us.

All we have to do is approach him in awe and wonder – open our hearts and love as God loves us.

Blessed art thou, O Christmas Christ,
that thy cradle was so low
that shepherds,
poorest and simplest of earthly folk,
could yet kneel beside it,
and look level-eyed into the face of God.



This is a little story I wrote many years ago – I thought I'd share it with you this Christmas...

It was a long time ago, but I've never forgotten it. It was the best thing that ever happened to me. I'd been fast asleep when dad woke me up – "Angels!" he'd whispered to me in wonder.

Angels had come and told him and his mates that a king, God's promised Messiah had been born - And that they should go and see.

He wanted me to be a part of it – even though I was a girl.

Quick, quick – he'd said, or they'll go without us.

So, following the blazing star that hung low in the sky we'd clattered our way into the town – a right rag tag bunch.

At first sight we thought we'd made a mistake and gone the wrong way. Would a king be here?

But as we looked up – wonder of wonders, that amazing star was definitely leading the way!

And it seemed to radiate a message of joy and excitement – my heart thrilled just to see it.

Come, come it called as it pointed to - a lonely little outhouse tucked away in a back street.

The rats scurried for safety as we hurried on, and it was odd because I thought I could hear the sound of singing – but it could just have been the song of the cold little breeze that meandered through the town and played around the frost touched houses.

The light of that star was mesmerising – I felt something inside me leap with anticipation as I hurried on behind the others into the wonder of that radiant light.

It was as though God himself were looking down upon me, that God was smiling upon his world and all his love for me and for everything that he had ever created was shining through that star and coming to rest in that place

Ahead of us we could see a little door that stood slightly ajar – was he in *there*, the king we had come to find?

Here - in a dirty little backstreet where rats jostled for shelter alongside the hungry, the lost and the poorest of the poor?

A king *here*?

But Angels wouldn't lie – and that star...

I looked up at my dad, but he was looking at the others, all thinking the same thing – dare we venture in?

It was then we heard a baby's murmur and a mother's soft gentling: "hush, hush my babe" and we listened as she softly sang a melody of love

In the beauty of the moment we held our breath, never before had we been touched by a love so deep, so sweet...

And then, then, we heard that same gentle voice call softly to us: "Come closer" she said, "He is here, just push the door..."

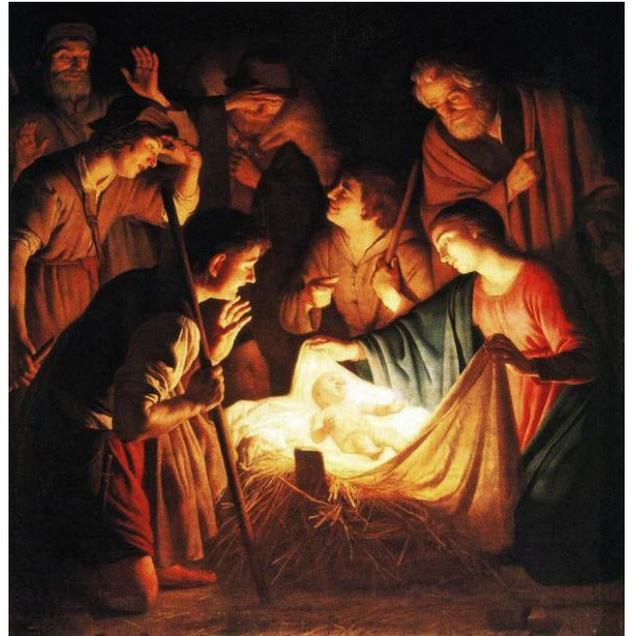
With hands that trembled we lit a candle – we had to see

A few steps into the gloom, and then – it was as though the star had broken through the roof and was in there with us!

It was as if the light of a thousand candles streamed around us as we looked and saw...

God's love smiling at us and beckoning us to come still closer.

And so - we did.



May you draw close to Jesus and see the face of God this Christmas and always. Much love to you all

Revd Janet

A CHRISTMAS POEM FROM FR TRACY

My mother in law was given a piece of paper with a poem written on it over fifty years ago. She doesn't know who it is by, but she has kept it near her ever since, particularly at Christmas. I thought I would share it, as it is rather lovely.

Christmas is a gift of love
That cannot be bought or sold.
It's ours just for the asking
And it's worth more than gold.
This priceless gift of Christmas
Is in the reach of all,
The rich, the poor, the young, the old,
The greatest and the small.
So take God's Christmas gift of love,
Reach out and you'll receive.
The only payment that God asks
is just that you believe.



At that time, Augustus Caesar sent an order to all people in the countries that were under Roman rule. The order said that they must list their names in a register. This was the first registration taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to their own towns to be registered.

So Joseph left Nazareth, a town in Galilee. He went to the town of Bethlehem in Judea. This town was known as the town of David. Joseph went there because he was from the family of David. Joseph registered with Mary because she was engaged to marry him. (Mary was now pregnant.) While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have the baby. She gave birth to her first son. There were no rooms left in the inn. So she wrapped the baby with cloths and laid him in a box where animals are fed.

That night, some shepherds were in the fields nearby watching their sheep. An angel of the Lord stood before them. The glory of the Lord was shining around them, and suddenly they became very frightened. The angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, because I am bringing you some good news. It will be a joy to all the people. Today your Savior was born in David’s town. He is Christ, the Lord. This is how you will know him: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a feeding box.”

Then a very large group of angels from heaven joined the first angel. All the angels were praising God, saying:

“Give glory to God in heaven,
and on earth let there be peace to the people who please God.”

Then the angels left the shepherds and went back to heaven. The shepherds said to each other, “Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened. We will see this thing the Lord told us about.”

So the shepherds went quickly and found Mary and Joseph. And the shepherds saw the baby lying in a feeding box. Then they told what the angels had said about this child. Everyone was amazed when they heard what the shepherds said to them. Mary hid these things in her heart; she continued to think about them. Then the shepherds went back to their sheep, praising God and thanking him for everything that they had seen and heard. It was just as the angel had told them.

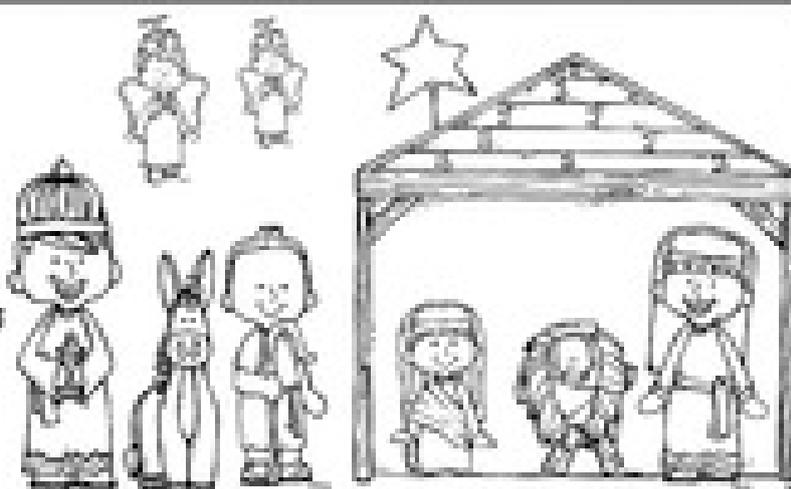
CHRISTMAS



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Christ
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 shepherds
 king
 manger
 wise men
 prince
 hay
 angels
 baby
 sing
 peace
 swaddling

Mary
 Joseph
 love
 joy
 child
 holiday
 cards
 celebrate
 Christmas
 giving
 Noel



On the next page there are the characters from the Christmas story. Why not colour them in and cut them out to make your own picture of the stable. If you pasted them onto card before cutting them out you could make a stand for each and have a 3D nativity scene where you can tell the story yourself. Or even add a loop to the back of each to make them finger puppets and tell the story to the rest of your household.

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