

The Prayer Service with readings from
Christmas Eve Prayer, prayer from the *Roman Martyrology*
Celano, First Life, from Omnibus and
Christmas Crib, from Franciscans Friars, TOR

OR to just read about the FIRST CHRISTMAS CRÈCHE –

Readings marked READER: PART I, READER: PART II,
and READER: PART III

In the Next pages:

The Reader can be St. Francis or pick a person to do St. Francis. When the Reader reads the vision of John of Greccio, the person who plays St. Francis goes to the manger and the person pretends to awaken the baby Jesus and picks him up, and he hugs him then puts him back in the manger (when the Child Jesus appeared, no one saw the Child Jesus except John and St. Francis, so there is no figure in our little manger).

The First Creche was a manger with hay, an ox, a donkey, towns people with torches and lanterns, and the brothers.

If you make the Christmas Creche with figures, make the hay out of strips of paper and write the miracles on each as reported in PART III.

PRAYER SERVICE

READER: PART I - from:

Celano, First Life 86-87 from Omnibus
(and "Christmas Crib" from Franciscan Friars T.O.R.)

St. Francis' highest intention, greatest desire, and supreme purpose was to observe the holy gospel in and through all things. He wanted to follow the doctrine and walk in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to do so perfectly, with all vigilance, all zeal, complete desire of the mind, complete fervor of the heart. He remembered Christ's words through constant meditation and recalled his actions through wise consideration. The humility of the incarnation and the love of the passion so occupied his memory that he scarcely wished to think of anything else. Hence what he did in the third year before the day of his glorious death, in the town called Greccio, 45 miles south of Assisi, on the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ, should be reverently remembered.

There was in that place a certain man named John, of good reputation and even better life, whom the blessed Francis particularly loved. Noble and honorable in his own land, he had trodden on nobility of the flesh and pursued that of the mind. Around fifteen days before the birthday of Christ, Francis sent for this man, as he often did, and said to him, "If you wish to celebrate the approaching feast of the Lord at Greccio, hurry and do what I tell you. I want to do something that will recall the memory of that child who was born in Bethlehem, to see with bodily eyes the inconveniences of his infancy, how he lay in the manger, and how the ox and ass stood by." Upon hearing this, the good and faithful man hurried to prepare all that the holy man had requested.

The day of joy drew near, the time of exultation approached. The brothers were called from their various places. With glad hearts, the men and women of that place prepared, according to their means, candles and torches to light up that night which has illuminated all the days and years with its glittering star. Finally the holy man of God arrived and, finding everything prepared, saw it and rejoiced.

The manger is ready, hay is brought, the ox and ass are led in. Simplicity is honored there, poverty is exalted, humility is commended and a new Bethlehem, as it were, is made from Greccio.

[SET UP FIRST CHRISTMAS CRECHE (Nativity)]

Catholic Prayer: Christmas Eve Prayer

Description:

This prayer from the Roman Martyrology is said by the family on Christmas Eve to celebrate Christ's birth, accompanied by the placement of the Christ Child in the crib in the home.

Prayer:

From the Roman Martyrology:

In the twenty-fourth day of the month of December;
In the year five-thousand one-hundred and ninety-nine from the creation of the world, when in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;
In the year two-thousand nine-hundred and fifty-seven from the flood;
In the year two-thousand and fifty-one from the birth of Abraham;
In the year one-thousand five-hundred and ten from the going forth of the people of Israel out of Egypt under Moses;
In the year one-thousand and thirty-two from the anointing of David as king;
In the sixty-fifth week according to the prophecy of Daniel;
In the one-hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad;
In the year seven-hundred and fifty-two from the foundation of the city of Rome;
In the forty-second year of the reign of the Emperor Octavian Augustus;
In the sixth age of the world, while the whole earth was at peace—

JESUS CHRIST

eternal God and the Son of the eternal Father, willing to consecrate the world by His gracious coming, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit, and the nine months of His conception being now accomplished, (*all kneel or bow*) was born in Bethlehem of Judah of the Virgin Mary, made man. The birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the flesh.

All: Thanks be to God.

READER: PART II - from Celano, First Life and Christmas Crib

Night is illuminated like the day, delighting men and beasts. The people come and joyfully celebrate the new mystery. The forest resounds with voices and the

rocks respond to their rejoicing. The brothers sing, discharging their debt of praise to the Lord, and the whole night echoes with jubilation. The holy man of God stands before the manger full of sighs, consumed by devotion and filled with a marvelous joy. The solemnities of the mass are performed over the manger and the priest experiences a new consolation.

The holy man of God wears a deacon's vestments, for he was indeed a deacon, and he sings the holy gospel with a sonorous voice. And his voice, a sweet voice, a vehement voice, a clear voice, a sonorous voice, invites all to the highest rewards. Then he preaches mellifluously (melodiously) to the people standing about, telling them about the birth of the poor king and the little city of Bethlehem.

(... aglow with overflowing love for Him; and speaking the word Bethlehem, his voice was more like the bleating of sheep, his mouth was filled more with sweet affection than with words.)

Often, too, when he wished to mention Jesus Christ, burning with love he called him "the child of Bethlehem," and speaking the word "Bethlehem" or "Jesus," he licked his lips with his tongue, seeming to taste the sweetness of these words.

The gifts of the Almighty are multiplied here and a marvelous vision is seen by a certain virtuous man, John. For he saw a little child lying lifeless in the manger and he saw the holy man of God approach and arouse the child as if from a deep sleep. Nor was this an unfitting vision, for in the hearts of many the child Jesus really had been forgotten, but now, by his grace and through his servant Francis, he had been brought back to life and impressed here by loving recollection.

Prayer All: This day Christ is born; this day the Savior hath appeared; this day angels are singing on earth, archangels are rejoicing. This day the just are glad and say, Glory to God in high heaven, alleluia.

All: (*All pray Psalm 110, one of the great Messianic psalms.*)

THE LORD says to my lord:

"Sit at my right hand,

till I make your enemies your footstool."

2 The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter.

Rule in the midst of your foes!

3 Your people will offer themselves freely

on the day you lead your host upon the holy mountains. will come to you.

4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind,

"You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

5 The Lord is at your right hand;

he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.

6 He will execute judgment among the nations,

filling them with corpses;

he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth.

7 He will drink from the brook by the way;

therefore he will lift up his head.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son * and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, * world without end. Amen.

All: This day Christ is born; this day the Savior hath appeared; this day angels are singing on earth, archangels are rejoicing: This day the just are glad and say, Glory to God in high heaven, alleluia.

Gospel of Luke 2:1-14

IN those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. 2 This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with

child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. 7 And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

8 And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. 10 And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; 11 for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!"

All: Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will. We praise Thee. We bless Thee. We adore Thee. We glorify Thee. We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.

O Lord, the Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father. Thou who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For Thou only are holy. Thou only art the Lord. Thou only Jesus Christ, art most high.

With the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Father: O Lord, hear my prayer.

All: And let my cry come to You.

Father: Let us pray. O God, who made this most holy night to shine forth with the brightness of the true Light, grant we beseech Thee, that we who have known the mystery of His light on earth, may attain the enjoyment of His happiness in heaven. Who lives and reigns with Thee forever and ever

Catholic Prayer Source: *Twelve Days of Christmas, The* by Elsa Chaney, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1955

ALL: Sing "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

READER: PART III - Celano, First Life and Christmas Crib

Finally, the celebration ended and each returned joyfully home. The hay placed in the manger was kept so that the Lord, multiplying his holy mercy, might bring health to the beasts of burden and other animals. And indeed, it happened that many animals throughout the surrounding area were cured of their illnesses by eating this hay. Moreover, women undergoing a long and difficult labor gave birth safely when some of this hay was placed upon them. And a large number of people, male and female alike, with various illnesses, all received the health they desired there. At last a temple of the Lord was consecrated where the manger stood, and over the manger an altar was constructed and a church dedicated in honor of the blessed father Francis, so that, where animals once had eaten hay, henceforth men could gain health in soul and body by eating the flesh of the Lamb without spot or blemish, Jesus Christ our Lord, who through great and indescribable love gave himself to us, living and reigning with the Father and Holy Spirit, God eternally glorious forever and ever, Amen. Alleluia! Alleluia!

ALL: take a piece of hay and read it AND add your prayer and intentions.