

THE INCARNATION Prayer Liturgy

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh and lived among us and we have seen his glory.” (John 1:1,14)

We pray...

Dear God, help us to see the manifestation of your love in the incarnational presence of Jesus and in the world around us; guide us to a deeper reflection in the infinite love depicted in the beauties of nature and of our brothers and sisters

and an appreciation of your great gifts to us.

Through the Incarnation of Jesus, we can deepen our intimate relationship with You, our brothers and sisters, and all of creation.

Give us the courage to share this gift of love with all of your creatures, and to promote justice, peace and love of creation in all that we do.



Song

Let us reflect on these words...

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

As Francis prayed and reflected on the Scriptures, he was deeply moved by the poverty and humility of Jesus who, though divine, freely and lovingly shared our human existence. As said in Phil 2:6-7, *”who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped, rather he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness;* and found human in appearance, he humbled himself...”*

“Francis invites us not only to see with our physical eyes but with our spiritual eyes as well, so that we might contemplate the humility and the real manifestation of divine love present in the Eucharist: “Behold, each day He humbles Himself as when He came from the royal throne into the Virgin’s womb; each day He Himself comes to us, appearing humbly; each day He comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of a priest” (Admonitions I, 16-18, FF 144).

For Francis, the Incarnation, the Passion, and the gift of Christ’s presence in the Sacrament of the Eucharist were the most profound expressions of God’s unconditional love for each of us. For Francis, God was not a distant ruler and judge, but a loving Father, Brother, and Spouse....

1 John 4:7-21

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love, does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son... ¹¹ Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another... if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. ¹³ By this, we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

¹⁴ And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶ So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.... ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us... ²¹ The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

The Word of the Lord. R: *Thanks be to God.*

Leader: Christ was born human and divine so we may more intimately relate with God.

All: God is Love.

Leader: Christ was born in our image; we were created out of pure love in HIS image.

All: God is Love.

Leader: Christ was born as a gift of love to us that we may be a gift to others.

All: God is Love.

Leader: Christ was born in simplicity and humility that we may live simply and humbly.

All: God is Love.

Leader: Christ was born in poverty and self-denial that summons us to follow His path

All: God is Love.

Leader: Christ was born to serve and love others so that we may better serve Him by showing mercy to our brothers and sisters in greatest need.

All: God is Love.

Leader: Christ was born that we might live through Him; God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another... if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

All: God is Love.

Reflection:

“On Christmas day, the Poverello, together with his brothers, prayed:

“This is the day the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it.

For the Most Holy Child has been given to us and has been born for us on the way and placed in a manger because he did not have a place in the inn”

(Office of the Passion XV, 5-7, FF 303).

As we celebrate the centenary of the manger at Greccio, we are invited to think about the place that Jesus occupies in our hearts, and even more, whether we have a place in our hearts for those with whom Jesus wanted to be identified:

“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40).

By his Incarnation, Christ Jesus eliminated any distance that separated him from humanity.

He calls us to do the same, that is, to be close to our brothers and sisters to welcome them, to touch them with mercy, as the Magisterium of the Church reminds us:

“With the simplicity of that sign, Saint Francis carried out a great work of evangelization... In a particular way, from the time of its Franciscan origins, the nativity scene has invited us to ‘feel’ and ‘touch’ the poverty that God’s Son took upon himself in the Incarnation.

Implicitly, it summons us to follow him along the path of humility, poverty and self-denial that leads from the manger of Bethlehem to the Cross.

It asks us to meet Him and serve Him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need”

(Admirabile Signum 3).

Prayers of Intercession:

1. Let us pray for the Universal Church, our religious leaders, and the Secular Franciscan Order, that all who share a common baptism might learn to use their gift of God's love wisely,
We pray to the Lord.

All: Christ be above me

2. Let us pray for the world, that leaders of nations might become doers of justice and defenders of the neediest and poorest among us, showing them mercy and love.
We pray to the Lord.

All: Christ be before me

3. Let us pray for all those who suffer from illness, hunger, homelessness, conflict, and loneliness, that as Franciscans, we may serve Him by serving those in need.
We pray to the Lord.

All: Christ be beside me

4. Let us pray for our churches, our workplaces, our communities, and educational institutions of faith, that all their members might be strengthened with a greater appreciation for the Incarnation, Jesus's infinite presence in our daily lives to live out His Holy and True command.
We pray to the Lord.

All: Christ be with me

5. Let us pray for all here present and our brothers and sisters not present. That through the presence of Jesus in the Incarnation, we might more deeply love Him, our brothers and sisters, and all of creation.
We pray to the Lord.

All: Christ be beneath me

6. Let us pray for the facilitators of today's Formation - the presenters, hospitality staff, and all assisting. That the work of their hands and words of their mouths may inspire us to more profoundly understand Jesus' humility and simplicity.
We pray to the Lord.

All: Christ be my comfort and restore me

7. Let us pray for all our Secular Franciscan leaders, that their words and actions might inspire us to better hear the call of the Holy Spirit, to learn from the wisdom of each other, to be open to daily conversion, and to live the Franciscan Charism as courageous, committed, and compassionate, Christ-Centered Franciscans. We pray to the Lord.

All: Christ be in the hearts of everyone...

Other intentions:

Closing Thoughts:

“As the Franciscan Family celebrating the centenary of the Christmas at Greccio, we are invited to pause before the mystery of the Incarnation in order to contemplate the depth of God’s love for humanity.

The Son of God becomes the Son of man; he becomes one of us, our brother

(cf. Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful 56, FF 201).

Our faith in the Incarnation prompts us to discover the seeds of the Word present in all cultures and in contemporary society,

so that we might bring to bloom the seeds of humanity we find there.

Moreover, it urges us, not only to defend life but also to become instruments of life and humanity in our families and fraternities, reaching out to those who are seen as social rejects, who are no longer considered human.

The concrete way that Francis of Assisi celebrated the mystery of the Incarnation at Greccio, invites us to more fully realize “that we have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life.

There is nothing more precious which we can give to others.” (Evangelii Gaudium, 264)

Closing Song



“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;...all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place [preeminence] in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.” (Col 1:15-19)

“God is love.” (1 John 4:16)

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