**Christmas Tree**

**CHAPTER 49**

**ORDER FOR THE BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS TREE**

Introduction

1570 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.

1571 According to custom, the Christmas tree is setup 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.

1572 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.

1573 The lights of the tree are illuminated after the prayer of blessing.

1574 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

1575 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.

**I. ORDER OF BLESSING**

Introductory Rites

1576 When the community has gathered, a suitable song may be sung. After the singing, the minister says:

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

All make the sign of the cross and reply:

R. Amen.

1577 A minister who is a priest or deacon greets those present in the following or other suitable words, taken mainly from sacred Scripture.

May the light of Christ, who is our peace and salvation, be always with you.

And all reply:

And also with you.

1578 A lay minister 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.

R. Amen.

1579 In the following or similar words, the minister 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

1580 A reader, another person present, or the minister reads a text of sacred Scripture.

Titus 3:4-7 - His own compassion saved us.

1581 or

Genesis 2:4-9 - The tree of life in the centre of the garden.

Isaiah 9:1-6 - A son is given to us.

Ezekiel 17:22-24 - I will plant a tender shoot on the mountain heights of Israel.

1582 As circumstances suggest, the following responsorial psalm may be sung, or some other suitable song.

Psalm 95 - R. Christ comes to enlighten us.

1583 As circumstances suggest, the minister may give those present a brief explanation of the biblical text, so that they may understand through faith the meaning of the celebration.

Intercessions

1584 The intercessions are then said. The minister introduces them and an assisting minister or one of those present announces the intentions. From the following those best suited to the occasion may be used or adapted, or other intentions that apply to the particular circumstances may be composed.

The minister says:

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

R. Lord, give light to our hearts.

Assisting minister:

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

Assisting minister:

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

Assisting minister:

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

Assisting minister:

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

1585 After the intercessions the minister, 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 . . .

Prayer of Blessing

1586 A minister who is a priest or deacon says the prayer of blessing with hands outstretched; a lay minister says the prayer with hands joined.

Lord our God,

we praise you for the light of creation:

the sun, the moon, and the stars of the night.

We praise you for the light of Israel:

the Law, the prophets, and the wisdom of the Scriptures.

We praise you for Jesus Christ, your Son:

he is Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace,

who fills us with the wonder of your love.

Lord God,

let your blessing come upon us

as we illumine this tree.

May the light and cheer it gives

be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts.

May all who delight in this tree

come to the knowledge and joy of salvation.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

1587 or

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 splendour,

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.

R. Amen.

The candles or lights of the tree are then illuminated.

1588 During the illumination of the tree, the cantor or another minister leads the congregation 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

1589 A minister who is a priest or deacon concludes the rite by saying:

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

R. Amen.

Then he blesses all present.

And may almighty God bless you all,

the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

1590 A lay minister 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.

R. Amen.

1591 It is preferable to end the celebration with a suitable song.

**II. SHORTER RITE**

1592 All make the sign of the cross as the minister says:

Blessed be the name of the Lord.

All reply:

R. Now and for ever.

1593 One of those present or the minister reads a text of sacred Scripture, for example:

Titus 3:4-7 - His own compassion saved us.

1594 or

Genesis 2:4-9 - The tree of life in the centre of the garden.

Isaiah 9:1-6 - A son is given to us.

1595 A minister who is a priest or deacon says the prayer of blessing with hands outstretched; a lay minister says the prayer with hands joined.

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R. Amen.