**Nativity Scene/ Manger**

**CHAPTER 48**

**ORDER FOR THE BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS MANGER OR NATIVITY SCENE**

Introduction

1541 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 cr�che 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.

1542 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.

1543 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.

1544 If the manger is set up in the church, it must not be placed in the presbyterium. A place should be chosen that is suitable for prayer and devo�tion and is easily accessible by the faithful.

1545 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.

1546 The blessing may be given by a priest, deacon, or a lay minister.

**I. ORDER OF BLESSING WITHIN A CELEBRATION OF THE WORD OF GOD**

1547 The present order 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

1548 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.

1549 A minister who is a priest or deacon greets those present in the fol�lowing or other suitable words, taken mainly from sacred Scripture.

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary, be with you all.

And all reply:

And also with you.

1550 A lay minister greets those present in the following words:

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

R. Amen.

1551 In the following or similar words, the minister 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

1552 A reader, another person present, or the minister reads a text of sa�cred Scripture.

Luke 2:1-8 � The birth of Jesus.

1553 or

Isaiah 7:10-15 � The birth of Emmanuel .

1554 As circumstances suggest, the following responsorial psalm may be sung, or some other suitable song.

Psalm 88 � R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

1555 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

1556 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 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.

R. Come, Lord, dwell with us.

Assisting minister:

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.

Assisting minister:

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

Assisting minister:

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.

Assisting minister:

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

1557 After the intercessions the minister, in the following or similar words, invites all present to sing or say the Lord's Prayer.

Let us pray as our Lord Jesus Christ taught us:

All:

Our Father . . .

Prayer of Blessing

1558 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.

God of every nation and people,

from the very beginning of creation

you have made manifest your love:

when our need for a Saviour 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 Saviour of all,

and who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

R. Amen.

Concluding Rite

1559 A minister who is a priest or deacon concludes the rite by saying:

May Christ our God enlighten your hearts and minds, 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.

1560 A lay minister concludes the rite by signing himself or herself with the sign of the cross and saying:

May Christ our God enlighten our hearts and minds, now and for ever.

R. Amen.

1561 It is preferable to end the celebration with a suitable song.

**II. ORDER OF BLESSING WITHIN MASS**

1562 After the gospel reading, the celebrant in the homily, based on the sacred text and pertinent to the particular place and the people involved, explains the meaning of the celebration.

General Intercessions

1563 The general intercessions follow, either in the form usual at Mass or in the form provided here. the celebrant concludes the intercessions with the prayer of blessing. From the following intentions those best for the oc�casion may be used or adapted, or other intentions that apply to the par�ticular circumstances may be composed.

The celebrant may introduce the intercessions with these or similar words:

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.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

or

R. Come, Lord, dwell with us.

Assisting minister:

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

Assisting minister:

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

Assisting minister:

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.

Assisting minister:

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

Prayer of Blessing

1564 With hands outstretched, the celebrant says the prayer of blessing:

God of every nation and people,

from the very beginning of creation

you have made manifest your love:

when our need for a Saviour 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 Saviour of all,

and who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

R. Amen.

**III. SHORTER RITE**

1565 This rite is especially appropriate for use when the blessing takes place in the home and is given by a family member.

1566 All make the sign of the cross as the minister says:

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All reply:

R. Who made heaven and earth.

1567 One of those present or the minister reads a text of sacred Scripture, for example:

Luke 2:1-8 � The birth of Jesus.

1568 or

Isaiah 7:10-15 � The birth of Emmanuel .

1569 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.

God of every nation and people,

from the very beginning of creation

you have made manifest your love:

when our need for a Saviour 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 Saviour of all,

and who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

R. Amen.