

Down and Connor Diocesan Novena



NINE BELLS TO BETHLEHEM

Wednesday 16th – Thursday 24th December 2020

Saint Peter's Cathedral, Belfast

The Great O Antiphons

It was the custom in the Middle Ages throughout the monasteries of Europe to sing the O Antiphons with the Magnificat at Vespers in the week leading up to Christmas. Each evening from December 17th to 23rd, a different monk in descending rank order, beginning with the Abbot intoned the antiphon proper to the Office.

In the Sarum Rite of England the tradition developed of beginning a day earlier and adding an eighth antiphon in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

During the singing of the Canticle and its antiphon the largest bell in the community was rung from the campanile. Like the Angelus bell today which calls to mind the Incarnation, it called the faithful to rejoice as it marked off the days approaching the Nativity. Wherever its sonorous tone was heard – over high slopes in Germany or France, along upper Alpine valleys, across Swiss mountain cantons or down the flood plains of Italy – it invited the hearers to join with the spirit of Mary on her journey to Bethlehem, and to share with her, through repentance and prayer, the grace of giving birth to the Saviour.

Though far from Palestine, the sound of the seven bells brought Bethlehem close to the hearts and minds of Christians everywhere, but to none more than those who chanted the antiphons and pondered deeply on their meaning.

From the 8th Century the people of God at Vespers has chanted them in the week leading up to Christmas. They are the distinctive prayers of Advent. They hallow the time of preparation for Christ's birth.

Through the seven days before Christmas Eve they are recited before and after the Magnificat, and as the versicle which preceded the Gospel at Mass. Thrice daily from December 17th, like bells tolling the hours of winter daylight and darkness as the Nativity draws near. The three and the seven – numbers denoting completeness in the sacred numerology of Judeo-Christian tradition. The period of waiting, they seem to say, is nearly over. The cycle of time is almost complete: like the closing of a perfect circle – O.

Adapted from “*Seven Bells to Bethlehem*” by Fr Oliver Treanor

Day 1



Hymn

**O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
And order all things, far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And cause us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Bishop: In the name of the Father, ✠ and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
People: **Amen.**

Bishop: Peace be with you.
People: **And with your spirit.**

OPENING PRAYER

Bishop: Let us pray.
O Wisdom, O holy God,
protector of all who hope in you,
bless your people, keep them safe,
defend them, prepare them,
that, free from sin and safe from the enemy,
they may persevere always in your love.
Through Christ our Lord.
People: **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READING:

A Reading from the Book of Wisdom

7:22-23, 25-26, 27. 8:1

There is in Wisdom a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible, beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent, pure, and altogether subtle. Wisdom is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty. Wisdom is a reflection of eternal light, a

spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness. In every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets; for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom. Wisdom reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Magnificat

Ant: O Wisdom, which camest out of the mouth of the Most High,
and reaches from one end to another, mightily,
and sweetly ordering all things:
Come and teach us the way of prudence.

✠ **My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on His servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.**

**The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy His name!**

**His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear Him.
He puts forth His arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.**

**He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.
He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.**

**He protects Israel, His servant,
remembering His mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children for ever.**

**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.**

DECADE OF THE ROSARY:

The Presentation of the Lord in the Temple

Bishop:

SUB TUUM PRÆSIDIUM

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God;
despise not our prayers in our necessities,
but deliver us from all dangers,
O ever glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

PRAYER TO THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

O Angel of God, my Guardian dear,
to whom God's love commits me here,
ever this night be at my side,
to light, to guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

CONCLUDING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Bishop: Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God,
fill our hearts with your love
and our minds with your wisdom
so that our actions will be pleasing to you.
May your peace, which surpasses all understanding,
guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

Bishop: The Lord be with you.

People: **And with your spirit.**

Bishop: May almighty God bless you, the Father, **X** and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

Bishop: Let us bless the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Day 2



Hymn

**O come, Adonai, Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Bishop: In the name of the Father, ☧ and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
People: **Amen.**

Bishop: Peace be with you.
People: **And with your spirit.**

OPENING PRAYER

Bishop: Let us pray.
O Adonai, O Ruler of the House of Israel,
protector of all who hope in you,
bless your people, keep them safe,
defend them, prepare them,
that, free from sin and safe from the enemy,
they may persevere always in your love.
Through Christ our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READING:

A Reading from the Prophet Zechariah

9:9-14,16

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be

from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double. For I have bent Judah as my bow; I have made Ephraim its arrow. I will arouse your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and wield you like a warrior's sword. Then the Lord will appear over them, and his arrow go forth like lightning; the Lord God will sound the trumpet and march forth in the whirlwinds of the south. On that day the Lord their God will save them for they are the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Magnificat

Ant: O Adonai and Leader of the house of Israel,
who appearedst in the Bush of Moses in a flame of fire,
and gavest him the law in Sinai:
Come and deliver us with an outstretched arm.

✠ **My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on His servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.**

**The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy His name!**

**His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear Him.
He puts forth His arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.**

**He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.
He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.**

**He protects Israel, His servant,
remembering His mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children for ever.**

**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.**

DECADE OF THE ROSARY:

The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God

Bishop:

SUB TUUM PRÆSIDIUM

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God;
despise not our prayers in our necessities,
but deliver us from all dangers,
O ever glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

PRAYER TO THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

O Angel of God, my Guardian dear,
to whom God's love commits me here,
ever this night be at my side,
to light, to guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

CONCLUDING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Bishop: Let us pray.

O Adonai, Lord,
almighty and eternal God,
deliver us from all that binds us to sin
and alienates us from you,
through the one whom we know as Mighty Saviour of us all,
Christ Jesus our Lord.

People: Amen.

Bishop: The Lord be with you.

People: And with your spirit.

Bishop: May almighty God bless you, the Father, **☩** and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

Bishop: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Day 3



Hymn

**O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Bishop: In the name of the Father, ☧ and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
People: **Amen.**

Bishop: Peace be with you.
People: **And with your spirit.**

OPENING PRAYER

Bishop: Let us pray.
O Root of Jesse, from whom all creation finds its origin,
protector of all who hope in you,
bless your people, keep them safe,
defend them, prepare them,
that, free from sin and safe from the enemy,
they may persevere always in your love.
Through Christ our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READING:

A Reading from the Prophet Isaiah

11:1-10

A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel

and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Magnificat

Ant: O Root of Jesse, which standest for an ensign of the people,
at whom kings shall stop their mouths,
whom the Gentiles shall seek:
Come and deliver us, and tarry not.

✠ **My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on His servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.**

**The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy His name!**

**His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear Him.
He puts forth His arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.**

**He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.
He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.**

**He protects Israel, His servant,
remembering His mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children for ever.**

**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.**

DECADE OF THE ROSARY:

The Descent of the Holy Spirit

Bishop:

SUB TUUM PRÆSIDIUM

**We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God;
despise not our prayers in our necessities,
but deliver us from all dangers,
O ever glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.**

PRAYER TO THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

**O Angel of God, my Guardian dear,
to whom God's love commits me here,
ever this night be at my side,
to light, to guard, to rule and guide. Amen.**

CONCLUDING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Bishop: Let us pray.

O Root of Jesse,
almighty and eternal God,
you reach deep into our hearts.
Plant within us a passion for your Kingdom;
through the One whom we know
as the Root of all righteousness,
Christ Jesus our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

Bishop: The Lord be with you.

People: **And with your spirit.**

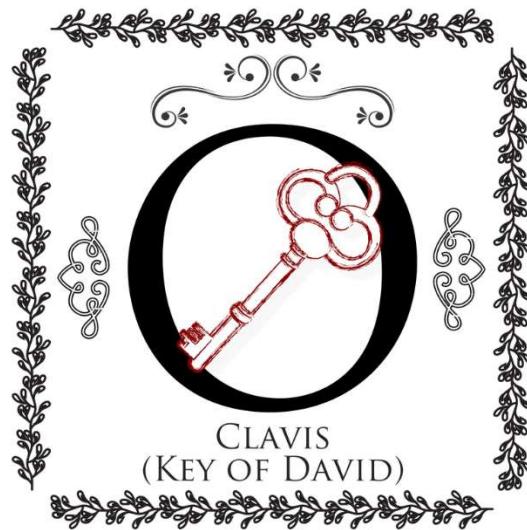
Bishop: May almighty God bless you, the Father, **✠** and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

Bishop: Let us bless the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Day 4



Hymn

**O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Bishop: In the name of the Father, ☧ and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
People: **Amen.**

Bishop: Peace be with you.
People: **And with your spirit.**

OPENING PRAYER

Bishop: Let us pray.
O Key of David, O holy God,
protector of all who hope in you,
bless your people, keep them safe,
defend them, prepare them,
that, free from sin and safe from the enemy,
they may persevere always in your love.
Through Christ our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READING:

A Reading from the Book of the Apocalypse

3:7-8, 11-13

These are the words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens:

I know your works. Look, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I am coming soon; hold fast to what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. If you conquer, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God; you will never go out of it. I will write on you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Magnificat

Ant: O Key of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel;
that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth:
come, and bring forth from the prisonhouse the captive,
who sitteth in darkness and in the shadow of death.

✠ **My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on His servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.**

**The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy His name!**

**His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear Him.
He puts forth His arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.**

**He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.
He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.**

**He protects Israel, His servant,
remembering His mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children for ever.**

**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.**

DECADE OF THE ROSARY:

The Crowning with Thorns

Bishop:

SUB TUUM PRÆSIDIUM

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God;
despise not our prayers in our necessities,
but deliver us from all dangers,
O ever glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

PRAYER TO THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

O Angel of God, my Guardian dear,
to whom God's love commits me here,
ever this night be at my side,
to light, to guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

CONCLUDING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Bishop: Let us pray.

O Key of David and of all our ancestors,
almighty and eternal God,
liberate us from captivity to our past,
that we may face your future's promise
with boldness and purpose;
through the One whom we know as the Son of David,
Christ Jesus our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

Bishop: The Lord be with you.

People: **And with your spirit.**

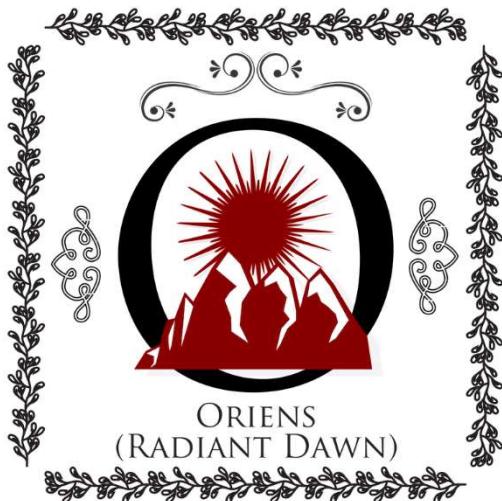
Bishop: May almighty God bless you, the Father, **☩** and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

Bishop: Let us bless the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Day 5



Hymn

**O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Bishop: In the name of the Father, ☧ and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
People: Amen.

Bishop: Peace be with you.
People: And with your spirit.

OPENING PRAYER

Bishop: Let us pray.
O Radiant Dawn who enlightens the eyes of our minds,
protector of all who hope in you,
bless your people, keep them safe,
defend them, prepare them,
that, free from sin and safe from the enemy,
they may persevere always in your love.
Through Christ our Lord.

People: Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING:

A Reading from the Gospel of Saint Luke

1:68-79

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favourably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty saviour for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies

and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The Magnificat

Ant: O Day-Spring, Brightness of the Light everlasting,
and Sun of righteousness:

Come and enlighten them that sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death.

✠ **My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on His servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.**

**The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy His name!**

**His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear Him.
He puts forth His arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.**

**He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.
He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.**

**He protects Israel, His servant,
remembering His mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children for ever.**

**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.**

DECADE OF THE ROSARY:

The Transfiguration

Bishop:

SUB TUUM PRÆSIDIUM

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God;
despise not our prayers in our necessities,
but deliver us from all dangers,
O ever glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

PRAYER TO THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

O Angel of God, my Guardian dear,
to whom God's love commits me here,
ever this night be at my side,
to light, to guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

CONCLUDING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Bishop: Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God,
you are the Radiant Dawn that chases away the shadows of the night:
enlighten our darkness that we may find the fullness of life
in the One whom we know as the Light of the world,
Christ Jesus our Lord.

People: Amen.

Bishop: The Lord be with you.

People: And with your spirit.

Bishop: May almighty God bless you, the Father, **☩** and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

Bishop: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Day 6



Hymn

**O come, Desire of nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease;
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Bishop: In the name of the Father, ☧ and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
People: **Amen.**

Bishop: Peace be with you.
People: **And with your spirit.**

OPENING PRAYER

Bishop: Let us pray.
O King of Heaven and Earth,
protector of all who hope in you,
bless your people, keep them safe,
defend them, prepare them,
that, free from sin and safe from the enemy,
they may persevere always in your love.
Through Christ our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READING:

A Reading from the Prophet Daniel

7:9-14

As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence. A thousand thousand served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court sat in

judgement, and the books were opened. I watched then because of the noise of the arrogant words that the horn was speaking. And as I watched, the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. As I watched in the visions of the night, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Magnificat

Ant: O King of Nations, and their Desire;
the Cornerstone, who makest both one:
Come and save mankind, whom thou formedst of clay.

✠ **My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on His servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.**

**The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy His name!**

**His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear Him.
He puts forth His arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.**

**He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.
He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.**

**He protects Israel, His servant,
remembering His mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children for ever.**

**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.**

DECADE OF THE ROSARY:

The Crucifixion

Bishop:

SUB TUUM PRÆSIDIUM

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God;
despise not our prayers in our necessities,
but deliver us from all dangers,
O ever glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

PRAYER TO THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

O Angel of God, my Guardian dear,
to whom God's love commits me here,
ever this night be at my side,
to light, to guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

CONCLUDING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Bishop: Let us pray.

O King of the Nations,
almighty and eternal God,
you defend the cause of the poor
and raise up the oppressed of the earth.
Help form us into a community where all are valued
and the vulnerable protected;
through the one whom we know as the chief cornerstone,
Christ Jesus our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

Bishop: The Lord be with you.

People: **And with your spirit.**

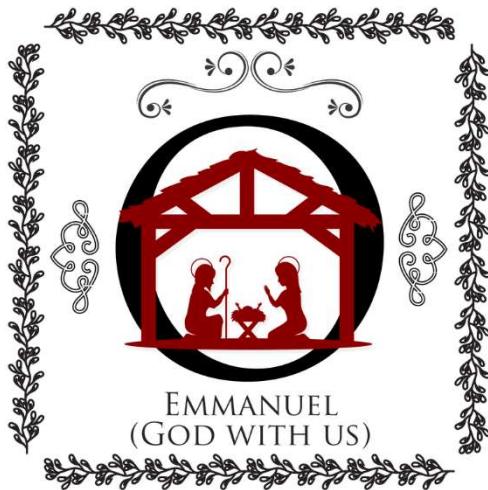
Bishop: May almighty God bless you, the Father, **✠** and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

Bishop: Let us bless the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Day 7



Hymn

**O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Bishop: In the name of the Father, ☧ and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
People: Amen.

Bishop: Peace be with you.
People: And with your spirit.

OPENING PRAYER

Bishop: Let us pray.
O Wisdom, O holy God,
protector of all who hope in you,
bless your people, keep them safe,
defend them, prepare them,
that, free from sin and safe from the enemy,
they may persevere always in your love.
Through Christ our Lord.

People: Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING:

A Reading from the Gospel of Saint Matthew

1:18-24

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace,

planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel',
which means, 'God is with us.'

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The Magnificat

Ant: O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver,
Desire of all nations and their Salvation:
Come and save us, O Lord our God.

✠ My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on His servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.

The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy His name!

His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear Him.
He puts forth His arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.

He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.
He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.

He protects Israel, His servant,
remembering His mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children for ever.

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.

DECADE OF THE ROSARY:

The Birth of Our Lord in Bethlehem

Bishop:

SUB TUUM PRÆSIDIUM

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God;
despise not our prayers in our necessities,
but deliver us from all dangers,
O ever glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

PRAYER TO THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

O Angel of God, my Guardian dear,
to whom God's love commits me here,
ever this night be at my side,
to light, to guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

CONCLUDING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Bishop: Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God,
you dwell beyond our farthest reach,
yet you are Emmanuel, God-with-us,
nearer to us than we are to ourselves.

Come among us in these days of growing expectation,
for you are the One whom we know as the promised Messiah,
Christ Jesus our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

Bishop: The Lord be with you.

People: **And with your spirit.**

Bishop: May almighty God bless you, the Father, **✠** and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

Bishop: Let us bless the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Day 8



Hymn

**The Angel Gabriel from Heaven came,
his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame:
'From God, all hail,' the Angel said to Mary,
'most highly favoured lady!'**

Gloria!

**Of her, Emmanuel - the Christ - was born
in Bethlehem, upon that Christmas morn.
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say,
'Most highly favoured lady!
Gloria!'**

Bishop: In the name of the Father, ✠ and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
People: **Amen.**

Bishop: Peace be with you.
People: **And with your spirit.**

OPENING PRAYER

Bishop: Let us pray.
O Virgin of Virgins,
we, your children, call on you,
pray for your people, keep them safe,
defend them, prepare them,
that, free from sin and safe from the enemy,
they may persevere always in the love of God.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
People: **Amen.**

A Reading from the Gospel of Saint Luke

1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?' 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered 'and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God' 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.' And the angel left her.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The Magnificat

Ant: O Virgin of Virgins, how shall this be?
 For neither before thee was any like thee, nor shall there be after.
 Daughters of Jerusalem, why marvel ye at me? That which ye behold is a divine mystery.

✠ **My soul glorifies the Lord,
 my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
 He looks on His servant in her lowliness;
 henceforth all ages will call me blessed.**

**The Almighty works marvels for me.
 Holy His name!**

**His mercy is from age to age,
 on those who fear Him.
 He puts forth His arm in strength
 and scatters the proud-hearted.**

**He casts the mighty from their thrones
 and raises the lowly.
 He fills the starving with good things,
 sends the rich away empty.**

**He protects Israel, His servant,
 remembering His mercy,
 the mercy promised to our fathers,
 to Abraham and his children for ever.**

**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.**

DECADE OF THE ROSARY:

The Annunciation

Bishop:

SUB TUUM PRÆSIDIUM

**We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God;
despise not our prayers in our necessities,
but deliver us from all dangers,
O ever glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.**

PRAYER TO THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

**O Angel of God, my Guardian dear,
to whom God's love commits me here,
ever this night be at my side,
to light, to guard, to rule and guide. Amen.**

CONCLUDING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Bishop: Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God,
in the psalms of David, in the words of the prophets,
in the dream of Joseph, your promise was spoken.
At last in the womb of the Virgin Mary, your Word took flesh.
Teach us to welcome Jesus, the promised Emmanuel,
and to preach the good news of His coming,
that every age may know Him
as the source of redemption and grace.
Grant this through Him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near:
your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.

People: **Amen.**

Bishop: The Lord be with you.

People: **And with your spirit.**

Bishop: May almighty God bless you, the Father, **☩** and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

Bishop: Let us bless the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**



The First Mass of Christmas

Blessing of the Crib in the Homes

My brothers and sisters, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, we pause to bless the Christmas mangers in your homes. When Jesus Christ Our Lord took flesh through the Blessed Virgin Mary, He made His home with us and so became a sign of God's living presence among us. As we look upon the figures of the Holy Family, the shepherds and the animals, the Christmas Gospel comes alive and we are moved to rejoice in the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

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 Blessed Virgin Mary.
To our lives He brings joy and peace,
justice, mercy and love.

Lord, bless **X** these Cribs;
may they 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.
Amen.

