Christmas Carol Service

**Presider’s Prayers and Blessing**

Opening prayer

Beloved in Christ,

be it this Christmastide our care and delight

to hear again the message of the angels,

and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem

and see this thing which is come to pass,

and the babe lying in a manger.

Therefore let us read and mark in holy scripture

the tale of the loving purposes of God

from the first days of our disobedience

unto the glorious redemption brought us by this holy child.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world:

for peace on earth and goodwill among all his people;

for unity and brotherhood within the Church he came to build,

and especially in this holy place.

And because this of all things would rejoice his heart,

let us remember, in his name, the poor and helpless,

the cold, the hungry, and the oppressed;

the sick and them that mourn,

the lonely and the unloved,

the aged and the little children;

all those who know not the Lord Jesus,

or who love him not,

or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Lastly, let us remember before God

all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore,

and in a greater light,

that multitude which no man can number,

whose hope was in the Word made flesh,

and with whom in the Lord Jesus we are for ever one.

These prayers and praises

let us humbly offer up to the throne of heaven,

in the words which Christ himself hath taught us:

**Our Father . . .**

The almighty God bless us with his grace;

Christ give us the joys of everlasting life;

and unto the fellowship of the citizens above

may the King of angels bring us all.

**Amen.**

*Alternative opening prayer*

In praise and thanksgiving,

let us rejoice as we await our Saviour,

Christ the Lord,

God-with-us,

Prince of peace.

For all the oracles of the prophets foretold him;

the Virgin Mary longed for him with love beyond all telling;

John the Baptist sang of his coming

and proclaimed his presence when he came.

It is by his gift that we already rejoice at the mystery of his nativity,

so that he may find us watchful in prayer

and exultant in his praise.

Prayer after the first reading and carols
(Old Testament prophecy of Christ’s coming)

Father,

Through all the ages you have called your people from darkness into light,

making their gladness greater and their joy increase.

As we celebrate a child born for us, a son given to us,

make the light of Christ bright in our own hearts

that we may once more bring peace and reconciliation to our families,

our communities, and to our world.

Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Prayer after the second reading and carols

(The annunciation)

Father,

opening her heart to the power of your Holy Spirit,

the virgin Mary was covered with your shadow

and she conceived a child most holy,

and he was called Son of God.

Open our hearts this Christmas time

to the presence of your Spirit working in us

that we may rejoice in your favour,

and bring again the Christ-child into our world.

Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Prayer after the third reading and carols

(The birth of Jesus)

Father,

Jesus, your Son, was of David’s royal house and line

yet there was no room for him at the inn

and he was laid in a manger

with the ox and ass as company.

In our celebrations this Christmas,

let us not forget the poor and the lonely,

the homeless and those fleeing poverty and persecution

and, in thought and deed, share our riches with them.

Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Prayer after the fourth reading and carols

(The shepherds)

Father,

you sent angels to the shepherds

as they watched their flocks by night,

bringing them news of great joy:

a Saviour born to us, who is Christ the Lord.

May we not be afraid to share with all whom we meet

the good news of your salvation,

peace and God’s favour for everyone who hears it

and ponders it in their heart.

Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Prayer after the fifth reading and carols

(The wise men)

Father,

the Wise Men saw the star as it rose

and it filled them with delight;

and they came to do the Christ-child homage

offering him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh

from their treasures.

May we follow your signs and wonders

in our everyday world,

as they reveal the presence of Christ to us

in those around us.

Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Prayer after the sixth reading and carols

(Non-Scriptural reading or poem)

Father,

shepherds and kings witnessed the birth of Jesus

at Bethlehem

and departed with good news for all people of good will.

With each passing year,

as we rejoice anew at the coming of Christ,

may we deepen our understanding

of the gift of your Son

who is your compassion and mercy,

your grace and salvation,

your repeated offer of hope

for the whole world.

Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Prayer after the seventh reading and carols

(Prologue of St John – the Word made flesh)

Father,

from all eternity

your Word is with you

and is you,

and all that is

came into being through your Word.

Yet, in the fullness of time,

this same word became flesh,

one like us,

and lived among us,

the glory of a father’s only Son,

full of grace and truth.

May we, once again this Christmas,

come silently in wonder and awe

as your life and light,

is given to us:

Jesus the Lord.

Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

The Blessing

The Lord be with you. **And with your spirit.**

When he came to us as a man,

the Son of God scattered the darkness of this world,

and filled this holy night with his glory.

May the God of infinite goodness scatter the darkness of sin

and brighten our hearts with holiness.

**Amen.**

God sent his angels to shepherds

to herald the great joy of our Saviour’s birth.

May he fill us with joy

and make us heralds of his gospel.

**Amen.**

When the Word became flesh,

earth was joined to heaven.

May he give you his peace and good will,

and fellowship with all the heavenly host.

**Amen.**

And may the blessing of almighty God,

Father, + Son and Holy Spirit,

come down upon you

and remain with you always.

**Amen.**

Go in the peace of Christ,

announcing the good news of Jesus' birth.

**Thanks be to God.**

***Sources***

Opening prayer (the Christmas Bidding Prayer) by Eric Milner-White (King's College Cambridge, 1918).

Alternative opening prayer adapted from the Roman Missal Advent Preface II.

Prayers after the readings by Adrian Porter SJ.

Blessing from the Roman Missal.