



*This resource is designed as a prayer experience in preparation for Christmas. Along with this guide you will need a device to play the linked song. You may also like to set up a sacred space featuring a nativity. Pages 1-4 can be printed as an A4 booklet.*

Begin by lighting a candle, perhaps the Advent wreath.

Take a moment to be still and quiet. By this light, know you are in the presence of God.

And let us pray † in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## SCRIPTURE - THE BIRTH OF JESUS Lk 2:6-20

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”



When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told to them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

## REFLECTION

Why is the season of Christmas such a *rush*?

Immediately after Halloween, specials tags are removed from the confectionary aisles whilst fridges are stocked with legs of ham and the commercialisation of the next marketable season begins - Christmas! We are inundated with images of Santa in a northern winter wonderland, reindeer and all. Then, in a matter of days following Christmas, the hot cross Easter bun bake-off begins. All things Christmas are reduced to clear and thrown in a specials bin as shelves are stocked with chocolate bunnies and easter eggs.

If this were to be translated from a theological viewpoint it would say something like: *"All you holy men and women, saints of God, pray for us, for no sooner as Jesus the Messiah is born we are ready to crucify him - albeit on a delicious brioche bun."*

This tendency to *rush through* the seasons impedes our ability to dwell in the mystery and revel in the gift each has to offer. For Christmas it means missing the joyful gift of the Christ-child and the fullness of the Christmas story, which is meant to be lived every day of the year.

Amidst the wrestling over the last bucket of prawns and the hustle and bustle of the shopping mall you may come across a nativity display. If so, take a moment to pause, ponder, and reclaim for yourself the meaning of Christmas captured in the still frame of the nativity scene. It reveals to us something of a vision of the kingdom of God and the true meaning of Christmas.

At the centre of the nativity we find the new-born baby Jesus. There is perhaps nothing more joyous than birth. In some places you might find an empty manger, a sign of hopeful expectation as we wait until Christmas Eve to place the baby in its rightful place. By this, we too are invited to live joyfully and hopefully, as our own hearts become the manger in which we receive Christ into our own lives.

Born in a lowly stable, Jesus is resting in a manger and wrapped up in cloth. This portrays an image of a humble God who is to be discovered not among the material riches of the world but rather in places of simplicity and even poverty. The extraordinary is to be found in the ordinary. This encourages the belief that sometimes hope comes wrapped in something as ragged as cloth and appears in the unexpected.

Surrounding baby Jesus, we find the simple-folk of shepherds alongside Mary the Queen of Heaven, the royal king figures and the heavenly choirs of angels. Despite not being welcomed into the inn and soon to become refugees themselves, Mary and Joseph welcomed a band of visiting travellers, all of them strangers. This leads us to consider our own understanding of what it means to be hospitable. Gathered in a circle around Christ this image speaks of equality, where all people, heaven and earth, are made one through the person of Jesus Christ. This reminds us of our call to respect and uphold the dignity of all regardless of status, prestige or success.

Even the animals: sheep, oxen, or donkey, are to be found surrounding the manger which lies beneath the Christmas star. By this we are reminded of the God of creation who dwells in all of the cosmos. We are reminded of our ethical responsibility to care for the sacred earth and all of it's creatures as we too embrace the created order as part of our own circle.

The kings/magi bear gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh (each with their own significant meaning), a reminder that Christmas is not about what we hope to receive nor is it about making Christmas lists of *wants*. Rather, it's about what we might be able to give. Not just material giving to people we know and love, but also through charity, time, the sharing of our talents given up in love and service as a gesture of thanks and praise to God.

A gift of love from our giving God, Jesus is our salvation who came into the world to reconcile us. Through his ministry Jesus shows us how to live our lives each and everyday - the Christmas way!

Guided by the shining star of Bethlehem we are led to experience the joy of Christ through building the Kingdom of God:

- a place of hope, peace and goodwill
- where all people are respected and treated with dignity
- where those without a home are welcomed and sheltered
- where all of creation is revered and cared for because it is sacred
- where we find true meaning and purpose in life through our giving
- where through our living for others we are people of service
- where we seek a just and fair world, unifying our indifferences and reconciling our past injustices

Let this be for us the Christmas message and inspire the way we live each and everyday. Let everyday be Christmas.

### **Reflection Questions**

*What is being birthed within your own heart this Christmas?*

*What joys and hopes do you long to receive with the birth of Jesus?*

*What aspects of Christmas do you hope to give life to throughout the new year?*

*In what ways will you seek to live everyday the Christmas way?*

## **PRAY**

Inspired by the Spirit of Christmas, we pray for the needs of our community and for one another:

We pray that during this season of Advent and Christmas the hearts of all people are warmed by Jesus' birth so that every hand is compelled to make peace on earth.

Lord hear us. **R: Lord hear our prayer.**

We pray that the homeless and refugees are welcomed and sheltered within our community.

Lord hear us. **R: Lord hear our prayer.**

We pray that humankind walks tenderly as stewards upon this earth in all its beauty, making wise and ethical choices regarding the sustainability of our planet. Lord hear us. **R: Lord hear our prayer.**

We pray the least, the lost, and the lonely ones find comfort through companionship and are valued in the belief that they belong as a part of the community. Lord hear us. **R: Lord hear our prayer.**

We pray that we find contentment not in the material things we receive but in the gift of loving and giving where there is a need. Lord hear us. **R: Lord hear our prayer.**

We pray that indifferences that divide people are overcome and unity is established. We pray that the wounds of injustice are healed through reconciliation. Lord hear us.

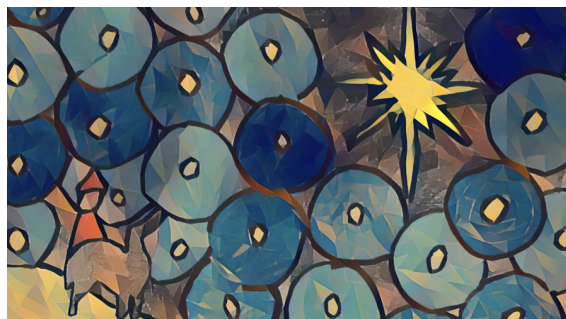
**R: Lord hear our prayer.**

May all people take time to revel in the gift of Christmas, allowing it to last longer than one day. May it endure in the hearts of all people inspiring each day to be lived the Christmas way - each day filled with joy, hope, love, and generosity.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

## SING - EVERYDAY BE CHRISTMAS [\(CLICK HERE TO PLAY SONG\)](#)

*(A vision of the Kingdom of God revealed through the birth of Christ)*



### Everyday Be Christmas

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V1. Jesus is born, Glory glory rejoice on Christmas morn.  
Mary's trust, finds God with us - Emmanuel.  
Laid in a manger and wrapped up in cloth,  
our hope, our Saviour.  
Glowing from this lowly place - the Light of the World.

**Ch. Let every day be filled with joy and hope  
and good goodwill,  
Let everyday be Christmas.  
Let everyday be Christmas.  
Shining Star of Bethlehem,  
guide our hearts to build a Kingdom  
where every day is Christmas.  
Let everyday, let everyday be Christmas.**

V2. The Messiah has come. On this day we give praise to the promised one.

A gift of love from a giving God to set the world free.

The angels all sing, alongside the shepherds, queens and kings.

A place for all people, held as equal in one family.

*Where every heart receives His birth  
and every hand makes peace on earth.*

**R. Let every day be Christmas.**

**Let everyday be Christmas.**

*Where the homeless and the refugee  
are welcomed and sheltered  
in community. R.*

*Where humankind walks tenderly,  
upon the earth in all its beauty. R.*

*Where the least, the lost, and the lonely ones,  
are comforted and shown that they belong. R.*

*Where the measure is not by what's received,  
but by loving and giving where there's a need. R.*

*Where indifference seeks to unify.  
Where injustice seeks to reconcile. R.*

*Let's make it more than just one day  
and live our lives the Christmas way. R.*

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





Note: This page and the page following can be printed back to back and used for a visio divina prayer experience. Visio divina means divine looking.

*In a similar way in which lectio divina might lead us to listen to the voice of the Spirit in our lives, visio divina may stir the Spirit within us through colour, symbol and imagery.*

Follow the steps below to pray the visio divina using the Everyday Be Christmas nativity artwork:

1. Take a moment to still your soul. When you are ready, **look at** the nativity artwork. What elements, colours, objects make up this image? What were you first drawn to? Where did you look next? Write down what you see.
2. Now **look into** the image. What connects with you the most? What resonates? Consider what this could mean? Is there a metaphor to be explored? Based on this connection, what title would you give to this artwork?
3. Now contemplate a while. What might the Spirit be saying to you through this experience? Where are you being called? What question is being asked of you?
4. Take a moment to sit quietly in God's presence, pondering these thoughts. You may like to take a quiet walk, or write in your journal. Whatever you choose, simply rest in God's love, and listen.
5. As you end your prayer, you might like to say a short prayer such as the Glory Be or Our Father, or simply name the things which you give thanks for today.





Illustrations by Eden Hart.