

SAINTS PETER AND PAUL CATHEDRAL

NOVENA BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Introduction: Father Charles Vachetta, pastor of the Church of the Immaculate in Turin, Italy, wanted to give his parishioners something special for the Advent of 1721. He wanted them to understand the intertwining of the Old and New Testaments so they could see for themselves the love of God unfold from the beginning of time and for all eternity. Father Vachetta decided to give them the gift of a novena - a prayer going deep into the spirit of Advent, leaving one inspired with inexpressible joy. So Father Vachetta began to write his nine-day prayer, to stir the hearts of his parishioners to eagerly await the coming of Christ. *(This is our aim by adapting this prayer for our use here in Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral)*

Father Vachetta was a poet and scholar, steeped in Biblical theology. Using the Latin Vulgate, he wove the novena from the psalms and prophecies of the Old Testament which foretold the coming of the Messiah and crowned his masterpiece by retelling the birth of John the Baptist.

Then, taking some of Scripture's lesser-known prophecies, he composed a canticle, or prayer - song of incomparable beauty called "Let the Heavens Be Glad." The canticle is sung after the seven major prophecies and makes a fitting antiphon for the Scripture readings of the day.

The Christmas novena, as it is now known, begins on December 16, nine days before Christmas, and ends on Christmas Eve. Father Vachetta left us the heritage of a lovely Advent tradition and his work continues to prepare hearts for the coming of Christ through the prophecies, psalms and Gospels. His Christmas novena will inspire people for ages to come. *(Let us allow it now to inspire us in Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral as we prepare to welcome Jesus at Christmas)*

The CHRISTMAS NOVENA PRAYER

(by Fr. Vachetta of the Church of the Immaculate – Turin, Italy - Advent – 1721)
(Adapted by Fr. Ferdzefer Cyprian Tatah
for use at SS Peter & Paul Cathedral USVI)

(If the novena is led by a priest, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed).

Hymn: BEHOLD A THRILLING VOICE
(Tune: "Creator of the Starry Skies")

1

Behold a thrilling voice calls out
And chides the darkened shades of earth
Pale dreams are gone, dim shadows fly
Christ in his might now shines on high!

3

The Blessed Author of our race
Took human form to bring us grace
Lest lost should be those whom he made,
And he with love our sin repaid.

5

The Mother makes her spotless breast
A temple for the child to rest.
This Virgin loved the Holy One
And she conceived the Eternal Son.

2

The Lamb of God is sent below
Himself to pay the debt we owe.

O for this gift let every voice
With songs and prayers to God rejoice.

4

And see! with heavenly grace instilled,
A Mother's loving heart is filled.
Behold a Virgin's body bears
The mystery of endless years!

6

To him who comes the world to free,
To God the Son, all glory be,
To Father, Maker of us all
And Holy Spirit, God, we call.

(Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament if led by a Priest)

O SALUTARIS Hostia,
Qui cœli pandis ostium:
Bella premunt hostilia:
Da robur, fer, auxilium.

Uni trinoque Domino
Sit sempiterna gloria,
Qui vitam sine termino
Nobis donet in patria.

O SAVING Victim! opening wide
The gate of Heaven to man below!
Our foes press on from every side;
Thine aid supply, Thy strength bestow.

To Thy great Name be endless praise,
Immortal Godhead! One in Three!
O grant us endless length of days
In our true native land with Thee!

General Introductory Prayers for the Novena each day

Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
People: Amen

The Angelus

V/ The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary

R/ And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.
Hail Mary... etc.

V/ Behold the hand maid of the Lord

R/ Be it done unto me according to thy word.
Hail Mary...etc.

V/ And the word was made flesh

R/ And dwelt among us.
Hail Mary... etc.

V/ Pray us O, Holy mother of God

R/ That we may be worthy of the promises of Christ

V/ Let us pray

R/ Pour forth, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy grace into our hearts; that as we have known the incarnation of Christ, your son, by the message of an Angel, so by His passion and cross we may be brought to the glory of His resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. Amen

V/ Glory be to the Father..... (3x)

V/ May the divine assistance remain always with us

R/ And may the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.

Short Responsory

Leader: Drop down, ye heavens, from above.

All: And let the earth be opened and bud forth the Saviour.

Meditation on the Christmas Prophecies

Leader: Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!

ALL: Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!

Leader: Rejoice, Daughter of Zion, and exult Daughter of Jerusalem! Behold the Lord comes, and there will be a great light in that day, and the mountains shall drop down sweetness. The hills shall flow with milk and honey, for in that day the great prophet will come and he will renew Jerusalem. (cf. Zeph 3:14-18)

Leader: *Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!*

ALL: *Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!*

Leader: Behold the God-Man of the house of David will come to sit upon the royal throne and you will see him and your heart will rejoice. (cf. Jer 23:5-8)

Leader: *Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!*

ALL: *Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!*

Leader: The Lord our protector will come, the Holy One of Israel, wearing a crown upon his royal brow. And he will reign from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. (cf. Is 33:22)

Leader: *Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!*

ALL: *Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!*

Leader: The Lord will appear, and he will not deceive; if he should delay, wait for him to come. He will surely come and will not tarry. (cf. Hab 2:3)

Leader: *Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!*

ALL: *Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!*

Leader: The Lord will come down like rain upon the fleece of Gideon. Justice will reign and an abundance of true peace. All the kings of the lands will adore him and every nation will serve him. (cf. Jdg 6:38; Ps 72:3-4; Is 2:3)

Leader: *Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!*

ALL: *Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!*

Leader: A child will be born to us, and he will be called God the almighty; he will sit upon the royal throne of David his father, and he will hold sway, the sign of his power on his shoulder. (cf. Is 9:6-7)

Leader: *Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!*

ALL: *Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!*

Leader: Bethlehem, city of the Most High God, from you will come forth the king of Israel, and he will proceed forth from his eternity and he will be greatly praised in the midst of the entire universe. And there will be peace in our land when he will have come. (cf. Mic 5:2-5)

Leader: *Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!*
ALL: *Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!*
The Canticle or song-prayer

Antiphon (ALL): Christ the Lamb, who existed before time, in time, and exists for all time, will come to us again. He has been made high priest forever. He is the true king of justice and his reign will have no end.

ALL recite:

Leader: *Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice,*

All: O all you mountains praise the Lord.

Drop down dew from above you heavens,

And let the clouds rain the just one.

Let the earth be opened,

And bud forth the Saviour!

Remember us, O Lord,

And visit us in your salvation.

Show your mercy to us, O Lord,

and grant us your salvation.

Send forth, O Lord, the Lamb, the ruler of the earth,
from the rock in the desert to the Mount of Zion.

Come to free us, O Lord God of hosts;
show your face and we shall be saved.

Come, O Lord, and visit us in peace,
so that we may rejoice before you with a perfect heart.

May we know on earth, O Lord, your way,
your salvation among all nations.

Put forth, O Lord, your strength,
and come to save us.

Come, O Lord, and do not hesitate;
pardon the sins of your people.

O that you would rend the heavens and come down,
the mountains would melt in your presence.

Come and show us your face, O Lord,
you who sit upon the cherubim.

Antiphon (ALL): Christ the Lamb, who existed before time, in time, and exists for all time, will come to us again. He has been made high priest forever. He is the true king of justice and his reign will have no end.

Short Responsory

Leader: Drop down dew from above you heavens and let the clouds rain the just one.

All: Let the earth be opened and bud forth the Saviour.

Leader: Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

ALL: As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen. 3x

Leader: And may the Divine Assistance remain always with us

ALL: And may the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

(The leader moves to the Novena meditation for the particular day of the Novena)

"O Antiphons": From December 17 to 23, the liturgy uses seven short prayers that have special richness and importance. Known as the "O antiphons" or the "greater antiphons," these prayers compress and express the Old Testament Messianic hope for Christ. These antiphons are read each day at vespers and are used as the alleluia verse of the Advent Masses. Each antiphon is a mosaic of biblical references, collected and written in a style called anthological. The unknown author of these beautiful prayers lived around the sixth or seventh century. The author chose seven titles whose first letters are S-A-R-C-O-R-E. Read in reverse order, these letters form two Latin words "ero cras", meaning "Tomorrow I shall be."

Novena Meditation for each of the Nine days

(After saying the introductory part of this Novena, then we take the Novena Meditation for each day so as to enter the depths of the prophecies about Jesus who is to come).

December 16

Reading by the Leader: And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant--these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. (Is 56:6-7)

Consideration (Guided Meditation)

Leader: Advent prepares our minds and hearts for the coming of the Word of God. It is a gentle time, a time to watch that the word of Scripture does not fall on the rocky ground of distraction, nor by the wayside with our many cares, nor among thorns, caught up in flashy advertisements. It is to fall upon the rich soil of our minds and hearts where the Word of God can bury itself deep and bring forth fruit. The Lord is already near! Let us admit that we need his power and help. Come, Lord Jesus! Give us the gift of yourself. (*Silence for the people to talk to God and allow God talk to them*)

Antiphon (ALL): Behold the king will come, the Lord of the earth, and he will remove from us the yoke of our captivity. (cf. Hab 2:3; 1 Cor 4:5)

Leader: Let us say (sing) the Magnificat

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever. (Lk 1:46-55)

Intercessions

Leader: Jesus, light of the world, we wait in darkness, but also in hope for your coming;

Response: --show yourself to us in mercy and love.

Leader: Lord of Israel, you showed yourself to Moses in a burning bush;

Response: --stretch forth your mighty arm and come to save us.

Leader: Jesus, born of Mary, we pray with joyful hearts and wait with her in prayer;

Response: --Come, Adonai!

Leader: Jesus, life of our bodies and souls,

Response: --by your coming let us be immersed in the mystery of your incarnation.

Closing Prayer

Let us pray. Come to live among us, Lord, so that we may always receive your forgiveness and mercy. Jesus our king, clothed in a robe of flesh, give us love, wisdom and understanding at your birth. Reveal to us the mystery of your life, and then send us forth to reveal your Word over all the earth.

You who lives and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end.

People: Amen

(N. B. If the Priest is present, Benediction continues) if not the Leader concludes the prayer with the sign of the cross as follows ;)

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

ALL: Amen

Leader: Praise be Jesus Christ

ALL: For all times. Amen.

December 17

Reading by Leader: Assemble and hear, O sons of Jacob; listen to Israel your father. Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He crouches down, he stretches out like a lion, like a lioness--who dares rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and the obedience of the peoples is his. (Gen 49:2, 8-10) *(Silence for the people to talk to God and allow God talk to them)*

Consideration (Guided Meditation)

Leader: When we read Scripture and yearn for the coming of the divine, powerful Wisdom who will teach us how to live throughout our life, we think of Mary, the humble Mother of God who always waited upon the Lord as his handmaid. Father, you spoke, and your Word became man, born of the Virgin Mary. Christ humbled himself to share our human nature. We humble ourselves before the child and ask for faith and love. *(Silence for the people to talk to God and allow God talk to them)*

Antiphon

ALL: O Wisdom eternal, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High, you reach from end to end and order all things mightily and sweetly; come now to direct us in the way of holy prudence. (cf. Sir 24; Wis 6-9)

Leader: Let us say (sing) the Magnificat

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever. (Lk 1:46-55)

Intercessions

Leader: Christ our Redeemer, your law is a light to our path;

Response: --teach us always to walk in the light of your law.

Leader: Coming Saviour, dawn on us in radiant beauty,

Response: --so that we may receive you with loving devotion at your birth.

Leader: God of Jacob, you desire that all might be saved;

Response: --bring all people safely into the kingdom of heaven.

Leader: Lord of nations, show us your glory and give us true faith and love;

Response: --protect us from harm and let us live in peace with each other.

Leader: Lord of ages, you desired to become one like us;

Response: --may the revelation of your humanity free us from our sinfulness.

Closing Prayer

Let us pray. Come to live among us, Lord, so that we may always receive your forgiveness and mercy. Jesus our king, clothed in a robe of flesh, give us love, wisdom and understanding at your birth. Reveal to us the mystery of your life, then send us forth to reveal your Word over all the earth.

You who lives and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end.

People: Amen

(N.B. If the Priest is present, Benediction continues) if not the Leader concludes the prayer with the sign of the cross as follows ;)

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

ALL: Amen

Leader: Praise be Jesus Christ

ALL: For all times. Amen.

December 18

Reading by the Leader: The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness." Therefore, the days are surely coming, says the Lord, when it shall no longer be said, "As the Lord lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt," but "As the Lord lives who brought out and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them." Then they shall live in their own land. (Jer. 23:5-8)

Consideration (Guided Meditation)

God of Israel, you appeared to Moses in the burning bush. You delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt by parting the sea, and blessed your people with a covenant as a bridegroom marries his bride. Redeeming Lord, come to save us from the folly of our sins. Give us the blessing of a new covenant written in our hearts for all times. Rescue us with your mighty power! (*Silence to allow the people talk to God and for God to talk to them*)

Antiphon

ALL: O Lord and leader of the house of Israel, who once appeared to Moses and spoke to him from a bush aflame, and on the peak of Sinai gave him the law; come now, bring us your redemption with your mighty outstretched arm. (cf. Ex 3, 15, 24; Deut 5)

Leader: Let us say (sing) the Magnificat

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever. (Lk 1:46-55)

Intercessions

Leader: Light of the world, dispel our darkness,

Response: and make us worthy of your coming.

Leader: Key of David, unlock the mystery of your incarnation for all people,

Response: so that all humanity may praise you together in loving joy.

Leader: Eternal Son, let your face shine upon the sick,

Response: so they may serve you worthily in their infirmity.

Leader: Son of David, remember all those who are to die today,

Response: and bring them into your perfect light.

Closing Prayer (Leader)

Let us pray. Come to live among us, Lord, so that we may always receive your forgiveness and mercy. Jesus our king, clothed in a robe of flesh, give us love, wisdom and understanding at your birth. Reveal to us the mystery of your life, then send us forth to reveal your Word over all the earth.

You who lives and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end.

People: Amen

(N.B. If the Priest is present, Benediction continues) if not the Leader concludes the prayer with the sign of the cross as follows ;)

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

ALL: Amen

Leader: Praise be Jesus Christ

ALL: For all times. Amen.

December 19

Reading read by the leader: In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years. Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord." (Lk 1:5-14)

Consideration (Guided Meditation)

The infant king will stand as a sign in full view of all the nations. This king will be a sign not only for the Israelites, but also for the Gentiles. All people shall come to him. Our hearts call out, "Come Lord, save your people, do not delay, for we are ready to receive you; we desire to see you face to face." (*Silence to allow the people talk to God and for God to talk to the people*)

Antiphon

ALL: O root of Jesse, standing as a sign of the people, before whom even kings silent will remain, whom the Gentiles, too, shall beseech, come now to deliver us all; delay no longer. (cf. Is 11)

Leader: Let us say (sing) the Magnificat

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever. (Lk 1:46-55)

Intercessions

Leader: Son of Man, may we celebrate your birth, you who are the Lamb of God;

Response: you take away our sins and the sins of the world.

Leader: Son of Mary, while in your Mother's womb you were welcomed by Elizabeth and her infant son, John;

Response: though hidden, may we always recognize you and welcome you into our hearts.

Leader: God our Counsellor, come; tell us that your kingdom is at hand;

Response: protect the Church and the Pope. Keep the Church as your spotless bride.

Leader: Root of Jesse, you humbled yourself to share our human nature;

Response: come and save us without delay.

Closing Prayer (leader)

Let us pray. Come to live among us, Lord, so that we may always receive your forgiveness and mercy. Jesus our king, clothed in a robe of flesh, give us love, wisdom and understanding at your birth. Reveal to us the mystery of your life, and then send us forth to reveal your Word over all the earth.

You who lives and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end.

People: Amen

(N.B. If the Priest is present, Benediction continues) if not the Leader concludes the prayer with the sign of the cross as follows ;)

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

ALL: Amen

Leader: Praise be Jesus Christ

ALL: For all times. Amen.

December 20

Reading by the Leader: In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her. (Lk 1:26-38)

Consideration (Guided Meditation)

The original reference for the fourth "O antiphon" is Isaiah, chapter 22. "Key of David" refers to the one with authority over the royal house of David. The antiphon begs Christ to come and unlock the doors for his people who sit in religious darkness and in the shadows of death. We must wait with longing for our Lord. Mary's fiat--her total acceptance of God's will--brings us the glimmer of light and hope for the coming of Emmanuel, God among us. Mary carries the key of David who will free us forever. Hail, full of grace! (*Silence to allow the people talk to God and God talks to the people*)

Antiphon

ALL: O key of David, Royal sceptre of Israel, you who open and no one closes; who close and no one can open, come now, and free humanity from its bonds in prison, where it sits in darkness and the shadow of death. (cf. Is 22; Rev 3:7)

Leader: Let us say (sing) the Magnificat

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever. (Lk 1:46-55)

Intercessions

Leader: Adonai! Son of the living God! The day of the Lord draws near;

Response: he comes as the one who is to save us through his suffering, death and resurrection.

Leader: Virgin Mary, Mother of the Saviour, we wait with you quietly for the birth of your Son,

Response: who will set us free from ignorance and darkness?

Leader: Virgin Mother, you placed yourself at God's service and conceived his Son first in your heart, then in your womb;

Response: show us how to open our hearts and receive your Son, for we have a deep bond with you, Christ's Mother and our Mother, too.

Leader: Mary, our Mother, give doctors and nurses strength to bring their patients to health,

Response: that the ill might know the joy of good care in their infirmities.

Closing Prayer

Let us pray. Come to live among us, Lord, so that we may always receive your forgiveness and mercy. Jesus our king, clothed in a robe of flesh, give us love, wisdom and understanding at your birth. Reveal to us the mystery of your life, then send us forth to reveal your Word over all the earth.

You who lives and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end.

People: Amen

(N.B. If the Priest is present, Benediction continues) if not the Leader concludes the prayer with the sign of the cross as follows ;)

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

ALL: Amen

Leader: Praise be Jesus Christ

ALL: For all times. Amen.

December 21

Reading by the Leader: In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." (Lk 1:39- 45)

Consideration (Guided Meditation)

Mary and Elizabeth were deeply rooted in faith and love of God, and both responded wholeheartedly to God's plans. They are a sublime sign of hope for the whole human race. Families all over the world look to their example as they await the blessing of a new baby in their own homes. May they build a foundation of love for the child to come and correspond with joy to God's plans. Mary, the Morning Star, heralds the coming of her Son; Elizabeth is the first to understand. Her own son leaps for joy in her womb, and the two women embrace because God is in their midst. *(Silence to allow the people talk to God and for God to talk to them)*

Antiphon

ALL: O radiant dawn, splendour of eternal light and bright sun of justice, come now and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. (cf. Zech 3:8; 6:12; Is 9:2; 60:1-3; Wis 7:26; Lk 1:78; Heb 1:3)

Leader: Let us say (sing) the Magnificat

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever. (Lk 1:46-55)

Intercessions

Leader: Ruler of Jacob's house, teach us to guard what is good in ourselves,

Response: that we may cherish all that you have given to us, for you are our salvation.

Leader: God of power and might, help us to be patient and steady our hearts, because the coming of the Lord is at hand;

Response: drop down dew from above and let the clouds rain down the just one.

Leader: Lord, the one foretold by the prophets,

Response: be mindful of your promises to Abraham and his children.

Leader: Messiah, king of glory, you are the fulfilment of the Scriptures,

Response: grant that all people may recognize you as their Saviour and Lord.

Closing Prayer (leader)

Let us pray. Come to live among us, Lord, so that we may always receive your forgiveness and mercy. Jesus our king, clothed in a robe of flesh, give us love, wisdom and understanding at your birth. Reveal to us the mystery of your life, then send us forth to reveal your Word over all the earth.

You who lives and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end.

People: Amen

(N. B. If the Priest is present, Benediction continues) if not the Leader concludes the prayer with the sign of the cross as follows ;)

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

ALL: Amen

Leader: Praise be Jesus Christ

ALL: For all times. Amen.

December 22

Reading by the Leader: My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy,

according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever. (Lk 1:46-55)

Consideration (Guided Meditation)

In the Magnificat, Mary draws on the Old Testament prophecies and exults in praise of God. Mary's Son is destined to fulfil God's promises to his people. Mary rejoices in the deliverance of God's people and in his care for the poor and destitute of society. Her song bears another hymn that runs like a golden thread through the readings and antiphons.

The expected Messiah will be the Lord of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews. We pray in today's antiphon, "Come, king of all nations." Christ is the peacemaker, the bond of unity among all peoples. (*Silence to allow the people talk to God and for God too to talk to them*)

Antiphon

ALL: O king of all nations, the one for whom they have been yearning, the cornerstone who unites all of them in perfect union, come now, and rescue poor humanity, which from dust you have fashioned. (cf. Jer 10:7; Hg 2:8; Is 28:16, Gen 2:7, Eph 2:14)

Leader: Let us say (sing) the Magnificat

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever. (Lk 1:46-55)

Intercessions

Leader: Wonderful, Counsellor, Prince of Peace! In your great love for us you were born of the Virgin Mary;

Response: may her prayers for us be our joy and consolation at all times.

Leader: Mary has given birth to the Saviour, splendour of the rising sun;

Response: bring those who have died into your light through the intercession of Mary your Mother.

Leader: The angels proclaim a mystery today while shepherds hurry to a cave. Mary has given birth to a child in a cold, bare stable;

Response: we are ready to warm you, holy child, with our hearts. Let us honour you by our lives and deeds, singing glory to God in the highest and peace to all people of goodwill.

Leader: Christ, Emmanuel, Mary cared for you in joy and Joseph provided for all the needs of his family;

Response: help families to love one another and bond them together in love.

Leader: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you! Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb;

Response: truly blessed is she who bore the Son of God, and blessed too are those who hear the word of God--and keep it.

Closing Prayer (leader)

Let us pray. Come to live among us, Lord, so that we may always receive your forgiveness and mercy. Jesus our king, clothed in a robe of flesh, give us love, wisdom and understanding at your birth. Reveal to us the mystery of your life, then send us forth to reveal your Word over all the earth.

You who lives and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end.

People: Amen

(N.B. If the Priest is present, Benediction continues) if not the Leader concludes the prayer with the sign of the cross as follows ;)

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

ALL: Amen

Leader: Praise be Jesus Christ

ALL: For all times. Amen.

December 23

Reading by Leader: See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight- -indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse. (Mal 3:1-4; 4:5-6)

Consideration (Guided Meditation)

Malachi prophesies the birth and mission of John the Baptist. Like a new Elijah, John will go before the Messiah and prepare the people for the Lord's coming. A spirit of joy and wonderment pervades today's prophecy, for the hand of God is active in Israel. The people wonder what it will all mean for their future. What does it mean for us today? The seventh "O antiphon" climaxes the series. The Messiah is addressed in human form. He is asked to remain with us as Emmanuel. May our hearts be ready to receive the Lord into our small, personal world, as he once came to the little town of Bethlehem. Emmanuel--God is with us! God, stay with us. (*Silence to allow the people talk to God and for God to also talk to the people*)

Antiphon (Repeated by all)

O Emmanuel, our ruler and lawgiver, the expected of the nations and the Redeemer of all, come now to deliver us, O our Lord and our master. (cf. Is 7:14; Is 33:22; Gen 49:10; Zech 9:9; Jn 20:28)

Leader: Let us say (sing) the Magnificat

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever. (Lk 1:46-55)

Intercessions

Leader: King of kings, direct the minds and hearts of those who hold authority;

Response: let justice and peace prevail and let goodwill reign forever.

Leader: Lord Jesus, through your saving grace and power,

Response: may your Church continue to spread until it embraces every nation.

Leader: Jesus, prince of peace, you are meek and humble of heart;

Response: teach us to be thankful for all the blessings you bestow upon us.

Leader: Jesus, source of light and growth, increase vocations in your Church, like a gentle rain falling upon the earth;

Response: the harvest is great and your word must be announced through the entire world until your kingdom comes.

Closing Prayer

Let us pray. Come to live among us, Lord, so that we may always receive your forgiveness and mercy. Jesus our king, clothed in a robe of flesh, give us love, wisdom and understanding at your birth. Reveal to us the mystery of your life, then send us forth to reveal your Word over all the earth.

You who lives and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen

People: Amen

(N.B. If the Priest is present, Benediction continues) if not the Leader concludes the prayer with the sign of the cross as follows ;)

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

ALL: Amen

Leader: Praise be Jesus Christ

ALL: For all times. Amen.

December 24

Reading by the Leader: And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

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." Amen.

The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness
until the day he appeared publicly to Israel. (Lk 1:56; 67-80)

Consideration (Guided Meditation)

Come, O Lord, for the whole world breathlessly waits for your birth.
This one happy moment contains all ages--past, present and future--
bonding eternal peace between heaven and earth through a newborn
child. We bow in adoration and joy. In calm and peace we look into
ourselves and present to the infant our thoughts and sentiments. Lord,
today your goodness overflows and a branch springs forth from the root
of Jesse. The bud of salvation unfolds itself from the Virgin's womb in
the dead of winter. The seed entrusted to earth breaks forth in our cold,
frozen hearts and warms them with the presence of God in human
form. **(Silence is observed to allow the people talk to God and God to
talk to the people)**

Antiphon (All repeat) O Emmanuel, our ruler and lawgiver, the
expected of the nations and the Redeemer of all, come now to deliver us,
O our Lord and our master.

Leader: Let us say (sing) the Magnificat

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever. (Lk 1:46-55)

Intercessions

Leader: Father of the Word made flesh, bring us joy and peace;

Response: help us to live united in respect and love for each other.

Leader: We await the coming of your Son,

Response: for you are faithful to your promises of salvation and eternal life.

Leader: May we prepare ourselves for the birth of your Son,

Response: by meditating upon your word.

Leader: Through the Word made flesh may we learn to love each other,

Response: So Christ will find all of us waiting for him in joyful prayer at the Second Coming.

Leader: Adonai, God of love and mercy, help us follow the example of Mary,

Response: who believed the angel, hastened to help Elizabeth, and welcomed your Son in a cold, bare stable, warming him only with her exceeding love.

All repeat: Tomorrow the wickedness of the whole world will be destroyed, and over us will reign the Saviour of the world.

Leader: Our Lord and king is drawing near; O come let us adore him!

All: Near at last is Christ our king; O come let us adore him!

Closing Prayer (Leader)

Let us pray. Come to live among us, Lord, so that we may always receive your forgiveness and mercy. Jesus our king, clothed in a robe of flesh, give us love, wisdom and understanding at your birth. Reveal to us the mystery of your life, and then send us forth to reveal your Word over all the earth.

You who lives and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

(N.B. If the Priest is present, Benediction continues) if not the Leader concludes the prayer with the sign of the cross as follows ;)

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

ALL: Amen

Leader: Praise be Jesus Christ

ALL: For all times. Amen.

EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

(Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament if led by a Priest)

O SALUTARIS Hostia,
Qui cœli pandis ostium:
Bella premunt hostilia:
Da robur, fer, auxilium.

Uni trinoque Domino
Sit sempiterna gloria,
Qui vitam sine termino
Nobis donet in patria.

O SAVING Victim! opening wide
The gate of Heaven to man below!
Our foes press on from every side;
Thine aid supply, Thy strength bestow.

To Thy great Name be endless praise,
Immortal Godhead! One in Three!
O grant us endless length of days
In our true native land with Thee!

(Preparation for the Benediction, the Choir Sings)

TANTUM ERGO SACRAMENTUM, Veneremur cernui.
Et antiquum documentum Novo cedat ritui;
Præstet fides supplementum Sensuum defectui.
Genitori, genitoque, Laus et jubilatori;
Salus, honor, virtus quoque, Sit et benedictio
Procedenti ab utroque Compar sit laudatio. Amen

*DOWN in adoration falling, Lo! The Sacred Hos we hail!
Lo! Oe'r ancient forms departing, Newer rites of grace prevail.
Faith for all defects supplying Where the feeble senses fail.
TO the Everlasting Father, And the Son who reigns on high,
With the Holy Ghost proceeding Forth from each eternally,
Be salvation, honor, blessing, Might and endless majesty. Amen.*

Still kneeling, the Priest sings

Priest: Panem de cœlo præstiti eis.

All: Omne delectamentum in se habentem.

Priest: Thou gavest them bread from heaven.

All: Having in it the sweetness of every taste.

Oremus:

DEUS, qui nobis, sub sacramento mirabili, passionis tuæ memoriam reliquisti: tribue, quæsumus, ita nos corporis et sanguinis tui sacra mysteria venerari, ut redemptionis tuæ fructum in nobis jugiter sentiamus. Qui vivis et regnas in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

Let us Pray:

O God, who, under a wonderful Sacrament, hast left unto us a memorial of Thy passion: grant us, we beseech Thee, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of Thy Body and Blood that we may ever perceive within ourselves the fruits of Thy Redemption: Who livest and reignest, world without end.

R. Amen.

**SONGS OF PRAISES DURING
THE BENEDICTION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT**

1. Ah Ah Ah, Adoramuste Domine

(Ah Ah Ah We Adore you, O Lord)

(sang continuously until the blessed sacrament is put down)

2. Father, we adore you

1. Father we adore you, lay our lives before you
How we love you.
2. Jesus we adore you, lay our lives before you
How we love you.
3. Spirit we adore you, lay our lives before you
How we love you.

THE DIVINE PRAISES

Blessed be God.

Blessed be his Holy name.

Blessed be Jesus true God and true man.

Blessed be the name of Jesus.

Blessed be his most Sacred Heart.

Blessed be his most Precious Blood.

Blessed be Jesus in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.

Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.

Blessed be her Glorious Assumption.

Blessed be the name of Mary, virgin and mother.

Blessed be St. Joseph, her spouse most chaste.

Blessed be God in his Angels and in his Saints.

(When the priest is about to repose the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle, the choir sings the following Psalm 116 (two versions in Latin))

LAUDATE Dominum, omnes gentes, omnes populi.

Quoniam confirmata est, super nos misericordia ejus:

Et veritas Domini manet in æternum.

Et veritas Domini manet in æternum

Gloria Patri, Gloria Filio, Gloria et Gloria, Spiritui Sancto

Sicut erat in principio, et nunc et sempre,

Et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

OPRAISE the Lord, all you nations: praise Him, all you peoples.

For His mercy is confirmed upon us:

And the truth of the Lord endures for ever.

Glory be to the Father, Glory to the son,

Glory and Glory be to the Holy Spirit

II. Adoremus in Aeternum

Refrain: Adoremus in aeternum, Sanctissimum Sacramentum.

Verse: Laudate Dominum omnes gentes;

Laudate eum omnes populi.

Quoniam confirmata est super nos misericordia eius;

Et veritas Domini manet in aeternum.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.

Sicut erat in principio, et nunc et sempre,

Et in saecula saeculorum. Amen. (Refrain).

Pray

Constantly

Consistently

Ceaselessly