

## BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS MANGER OR NATIVITY SCENE

In its present form the custom of displaying figures depicting the birth of Jesus Christ owes its origin to St. Francis of Assisi, who made the Christmas crèche or manger for Christmas Eve of 1223.

The blessing of the Christmas manger or nativity scene may take place on the Vigil of Christmas or at another suitable time.

When the manger is set up in the home, it is appropriate that it be blessed by a parent or another family member.

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All make the sign of the cross as the leader says:

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

**R/.** Who made heaven and earth.

The leader or one of those present or reads a text of sacred Scripture, for example,

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke *(Luke 2:1-8)*

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrolment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock.

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**R/.** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

or:

**Reader:** A reading from the prophet Isaiah

(Isaiah 7:10 - 14)

The Lord spoke to Ahaz and said, Ask the Lord your God for a sign for yourself coming either from the depths of Sheol or from the heights above. No, Ahaz answered I will not put the Lord to the test.

Then Isaiah said:

Listen now, House of David:  
are you not satisfied with trying the patience of men  
without trying the patience of God, too?  
The Lord himself, therefore,  
will give you a sign.  
It is this: the maiden is with child  
and will soon give birth to a son  
whom she will call Immanuel,  
a name which means God-is-with-us.

**Reader:** The Word of the Lord.

R/. Thanks be to God.

The leader prays with hands joined:

God of every nation and people,  
from the very beginning of creation  
you have made manifest your love:  
when our need for a Saviour was great  
you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary.  
To our lives he brings joy and peace,  
justice, mercy, and love.

Lord,  
bless all who look upon this manger;  
may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus,  
and raise our thoughts to him,  
who is God-with-us and Saviour of all,  
and who lives and reigns forever and ever.

R/. Amen.