

PRIEST: As we rejoice at the birth of Jesus, our Saviour,  
we turn with confidence to God our Father  
praying that the peace and light which Christ brings  
will be welcomed into the world:

READER: **For the Church, that the people of God will always be  
a light to the world for those who live in darkness.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For peace on earth, that the peace which Christ offers  
will be a reality for all peoples.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For our own parish community,  
that our celebration of the birth of our Saviour  
will make us more aware of our unity in Jesus Christ.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For the lonely, the bereaved, the sick,  
and all those who are suffering in any way,  
remembering especially the victims of war and terrorism,  
that the light of Christ will shine on them.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

PRIEST: God of love, Father of all,  
the darkness that covered the earth has given way  
to the bright dawn of your Word made flesh.

Make us a people of this light.  
Make us faithful to your Word,  
that we may bring your life to the waiting world.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
in the splendour of eternal light, God for ever and ever.

PRIEST: As we remember St Stephen, the first to follow in the footsteps of Christ with his martyrdom, we thank God for his witness and courage and pray for our needs and the needs of the world.

READER: **For the whole Church, that she, too, will have the courage and wisdom of Stephen in her witness to Christ.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For all who guide and lead us in our faith;  
we pray especially for our deacons, that they will be inspired  
to follow the example of St Stephen in his fearless approach to opposition.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For peace on earth, that the peace which Christ brings  
will be a reality for all peoples.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For leaders and those in positions of authority throughout the world,  
that they will speak out for truth, with love, in the face of antagonism.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For our parish communities, that they will trust that the  
Holy Spirit will give them the words to enable others to see  
how Christ calls us to live, and love, today.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For all who are alone in this Holy Season, that they will  
know the comfort of Christ's presence.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

PRIEST: Lord our God,  
Stephen pardoned and prayed for his killers.  
Answer our prayers that we, too, may be filled  
with the same gift of prayer and forgiveness.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

PRIEST: In Baptism we are all made daughters and sons of the Father and so, with confidence in his great love for us, we turn to him with our prayers:

READER: **For the family of the Church that, by our unity and love, we will always bear witness to the love of God our Father.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For the whole human family that we may learn to live in peace, striving to break down the barriers of prejudice and intolerance.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For wounded families and broken families, that they may try to find common ground on which children may flourish in loving and lasting relationships.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For Christians everywhere, that they will endeavour to defend the sanctity of human life from conception to death.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For all who are sick or suffering in any way, mentally or physically, and particularly those who are victims of violence of or natural disasters, that they will be comforted by the love of Christ.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

PRIEST: God of love, Father of all,  
teach us the sanctity of human love,  
and help us to live in peace with the whole of humanity  
that we may share your life forever.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit  
in the splendour of eternal light  
one God forever and ever. Amen

PRIEST: Christ our Saviour dwelt among us and shared our grief and pain.  
As we remember the Holy Innocents, we turn to the Father in prayer:

READER: **For Pope Francis, Bishop Declan and all the clergy, that they may  
be the given grace to care for all those entrusted to them.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For all who are corrupted by power and who regard  
human life as cheap, that they may come to see the intrinsic  
value and worth of every human being.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For our world, especially those communities who live with the  
memories of massacre and gross cruelty, that they may find healing  
through reconciliation rather than recrimination.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For the children of our world, especially those who have  
suffered mental or physical abuse, that they may grow up  
knowing love and security.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For all who are ill and all who grieve, especially those  
parents or carers who have suffered the death of a child.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

PRIEST: Heavenly Father,  
the Holy Innocents bore witness not in word but in death:  
hear our prayer and grant us courage to bear witness to you  
in word and in deed.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

PRIEST: Jesus tells us that the greatest among us must behave as if we were the youngest and the leader as if he were the one who serves. In that spirit of humility we now turn to the Father with our prayers and petitions:

READER: **For Pope Francis, Bishop Declan and all those who lead us and guide us, that they may be guided by the Holy Spirit and so lead us with compassion and wisdom.**

*(pause)*

**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For all who are consumed by the love of power that, like Thomas, they may be touched instead by the power of the Spirit and so turn from greed to generosity and from bitterness to love.**

*(pause)*

**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For our world and all its people, that there may be peace among nations and a willingness to share the goods of the earth.**

*(pause)*

**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For all who struggle with faith, or are persecuted for their faith, that God's grace will strengthen them and give them renewed hope.**

*(pause)*

**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For the sick and the suffering and for all who have just experienced their first Christmas after the loss of a loved one, that the knowledge of the birth of the Christ child will bring them comfort and peace.**

*(pause)*

**Lord in your mercy**

PRIEST: Almighty God,  
you granted your martyr, Thomas, the grace  
to give his life willingly for the freedom of your Church.  
May we, too be willing to renounce our life in this world  
so that we may find it with you in heaven.  
We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

PRIEST: 'Nothing this world has to offer could ever come from the Father'.  
We ask the Father to hear our prayers and grant us all that we need  
to be faithful followers of his Gospel.

READER: **For the Church, that her leaders and members will be mindful  
of the need to serve the world in humility and faith.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For world leaders, that they may place the needs and rights  
of the oppressed before those who are revered in society** *(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For children and young people everywhere,  
that they will be guided by the light of Christ  
and themselves become icons of Christ for our world.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For all who are seeking a deeper understanding of their faith that,  
through the scriptures, they will come to know Jesus more fully –  
the Word, who is life.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For all who suffer sickness of body, mind or spirit,  
that they will know that, as children of God,  
they are loved and valued.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

PRIEST: God our Father,  
you have made us your daughters and sons in Christ.  
Open our hearts  
that we may hear more clearly your message of love  
and live more closely in accordance with your will.  
We ask this in his name, Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRIEST: No one has ever seen God: it is the only Son who has made him known'.  
With thanks for the gift of his Son, we bring our own needs, and the needs of  
our world, to the Father:.

READER: **For the Church, that the people of God will always be  
a light to the world for those who live in darkness.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For peace on earth, that the Word made flesh  
will fill us with his grace and truth.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For all who are searching for truth, that they will find  
in the life of the Christian a source of grace and light  
and a beacon of hope for our world.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For all the children and young people of our world  
that they may be loved and cherished by their families  
and by the societies in which they live.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For all who have died, that the Lord will raise them up  
and grant them everlasting joy.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

PRIEST: God our Father,  
our strength and our protection,  
open our hearts to your grace  
that we may always know, and do, your will.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

PRIEST: At the beginning of the New Year we turn to God  
asking that he will continue to pour out his Spirit upon us.

READER: **For the whole Church,  
that this coming year will see all who follow Christ  
more closely united in their discipleship of the Lord.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For our world, that the peace which Christ brings  
will become a reality for all peoples.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For all in our community who will receive the Sacraments this coming  
year: for those who will be baptised, confirmed, married, anointed, and  
for all who will receive their first Holy Communion. May the seal of  
God's Holy Spirit transform them into the image of Christ.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For ourselves, that we will form a community built on love  
and so be a powerful witness to the presence of God**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

READER: **For the sick, the suffering, the dying and the bereaved,  
that the light of Christ's love may shine brightly in their lives.**  
*(pause)*  
**Lord in your mercy**

PRIEST: Lord our God  
you come very near to us  
in the Child born of the Virgin Mary.  
In the depths of darkness she gave birth to Light;  
In the depths of silence she brought forth the Word.

Grant that we who ponder these things in our hearts  
may recognise in her child our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns forever and ever.