



Vespers (Evening Prayer) – December 17

*O Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love:
come to teach us the path of knowledge!*

Leader: O God, come to our assistance.

All: *O Lord, make haste to help us.*

Leader: Glory be 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. Alleluia.

HYMN

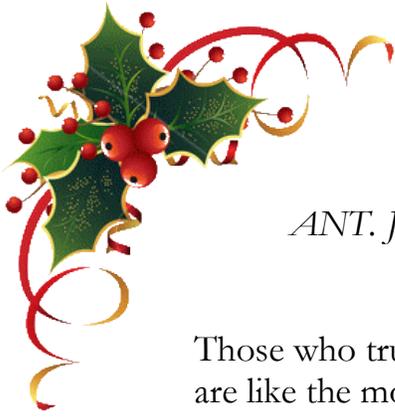
O come, O come, Immanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who ordered all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in its ways to go.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.





Psalm 124 (125)

ANT. Jesus came into the world as a child, in order to show himself ready to give us all good gifts. (St. Alphonus)

Those who trust in the Lord
are like the mountain of Zion: it cannot be shaken, it will stand firm forever. |

Jerusalem – the mountains stand guard over it,
and the Lord stands guard over his people,
both now and forever.
The sceptre of the wicked shall not rest
upon the inheritance of the just;
lest the just themselves stretch out their hands
and turn to wickedness.

Be good, O Lord, to the good
and the upright of heart.
As for those who turn away to crooked paths,
the Lord shall treat them like the doers of evil.
Peace be on Israel!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

Jesus came into the world as a child, in order to show himself ready to give us all good gifts. (St. Alphonus)

Psalm 130 (131)

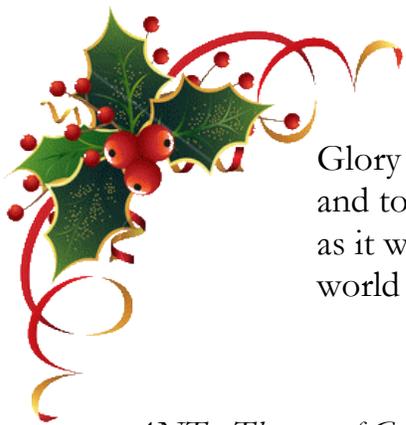
ANT: The son of God has given himself to us, in order that we may give ourselves to Him. (St. Alphonus)

Lord, I do not puff myself up or stare about,
or walk among the great or seek wonders beyond me.

Truly calm and quiet I have made my spirit:
quiet as a weaned child in its mother's arms –
like an infant is my soul.

Let Israel hope in the Lord, now and for all time.





Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

ANT: The son of God has given himself to us, in order that we may give ourselves to Him.

Reading: Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis
Admirabile Signum

The enchanting image of the Christmas crèche, so dear to the Christian people, never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder. The depiction of Jesus' birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture. As we contemplate the Christmas story, we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realize that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him...

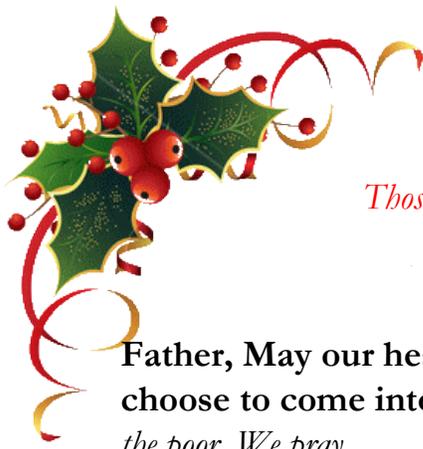
The crèche allows us to see and touch this unique and unparalleled event that changed the course of history, so that time would thereafter be reckoned either before or after the birth of Christ.

God's ways are astonishing, for it seems impossible that he should forsake his glory to become a man like us. To our astonishment, we see God acting exactly as we do: he sleeps, takes milk from his mother, cries and plays like every other child! As always, God baffles us. He is unpredictable, constantly doing what we least expect. The nativity scene shows God as he came into our world, but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God's own life. It invites us to become his disciples if we want to attain ultimate meaning in life.

Response to the Reading: (Reflective Music)

In the IHM tradition let us choose a court of the infant king. May this aspect of Jesus birth assist us in reflecting on our desire to welcome the Lord Jesus into our lives and world during the Christmas season and throughout the year.





Courts of the King

Those who selected the same court please read together the prayer petition.

All will respond: ***Come, Lord Jesus***

Father, May our hearts, like the **stable**, be open to receive you in each way that you choose to come into our hearts; - *Jesus, touch us with the grace of devotion to your service, and especially the poor. We pray...*

Father, may we, like the **crib**, offer our being as a place for your son Jesus to dwell; - *Jesus, dwell in our hearts, and make our lives filled with tender love for You and all those you send into our lives. We pray...*

Father, may we, like the **angels**, bring the good news of your coming to all those we meet this day; - *Jesus, give us singleness of vision and gentleness of spirit to proclaim your good news to all people.*

Father, you called **Wise Men** who studied the heavens from the east into the presence of your son; - *Jesus, strengthen our efforts to be present to you in prayer.*

Father, when the **shepherds** heard the song of the angels they went to seek Jesus; - *Jesus, give us a listening heart, always ready to hear the prompting of the spirit and always willing to respond with love.*

Father, you chose **Joseph** to enter into the mystery of the birth of your son; - *Jesus, deepen our trust in your word, and teach us to depend on your providence in all the circumstances of our lives.*

Father, the **star** revealed your love to those who sought you; - *Jesus, grant us the vision to see and draw forth the goodness you have placed in others.*

Father, you chose **Bethlehem** as the place where your Son would come to dwell among us; - *Jesus, like those who were led to Bethlehem, the House of Bread, lead us to a deeper love of your presence in the Eucharist.*





Father, Mary laid Jesus on the **straw** as his first resting place, *-Jesus, let our charity be the straw that strengthens us and provides support for others.*

Father, the warmth of the **animal's** breath sheltered your Son during the first hours of his life as a man; *- Jesus, give us understanding in our relationships with one another so that we that we may know how to respond to all who need us.*

Father, you chose **Mary** for the mother of your Son and you willed that her motherhood be virginal, entirely dependent on you rather than others; *- Jesus, give us the gift of faith so that we may learn to rely on the power of your Spirit in our lives rather than on our own efforts.*



Canticle: Magnificat

ANT: O Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love: come to teach us the path of knowledge!

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly farmer's foot.

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

He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever.



*ANT: O Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love:
come to teach us the path of knowledge!*

Leader: “The Christmas crèche is part of the precious yet demanding process of passing on the faith. Beginning in childhood, and at every stage of our lives, it teaches us to contemplate Jesus, to experience God’s love for us, to feel and believe that God is with us.” United in this belief we pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father ...

Hold the crèche ornament in one hand as the final prayer is prayed.

Leader:

God of every nation and people, from the very beginning of creation you have made manifest your love: when our need for a Savior 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 *crèche* ; may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus, and raise our thoughts to him, who is God-with-us and Savior of all, and who lives and reigns forever and ever.

All: Amen

All: The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Hymn: Joy to the World

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

