

Returning to the Manger

Creative
Communications

CHRISTMAS DAY

A SERVICE FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

Returning to the Manger

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Returning to the Manger

A SERVICE FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

ABOUT THE SERVICE

This service for Christmas Day highlights how we should continue to return to the manger during the Christmas season and beyond to remember the wonderful event that happened there, instead of focusing on returning to the mall to return or exchange unwanted gifts. Hymns in the service include “A Great And Mighty Wonder,” “Hark the Herald Angels Sing,” “Away in a Manger,” “Gentle Mary Laid Her Child” and “Joy to the World.”

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NEWSLETTER/BULLETIN NOTICES

NEWSLETTER NOTICE

Join us for a special Christmas Day service called “Returning to the Manger.” The service will highlight how we should continue to return to the manger during the Christmas season and beyond to remember the wonderful event that happened there, instead of focusing on returning to the mall to return or exchange unwanted gifts. The beloved Christmas carols, classic Scripture readings, inspiring words of the homily and the original prayers will be sure to enrich your Christmas Day experience.

Bulletin Notice

Welcome to this special Christmas Day service called “Returning to the Manger.” This service will highlight how we should continue to return to the manger during the Christmas season and beyond to remember the wonderful event that happened there, instead of focusing on returning to the mall to return or exchange unwanted gifts. Let the beloved Christmas carols, classic Scripture readings, inspiring words of the homily and the original prayers enrich your Christmas Day experience.

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COMPLETE SCRIPT FOR WORSHIP LEADERS

- If desired, an **Environmental Projection** of the following image (purchased by you from shutterstock.com) can be shown on a screen or on the walls of your worship space to set the tone for the service before the service begins or throughout the service at various points:

<https://www.shutterstock.com/image-vector/christian-christmas-nativity-scene-baby-jesus-496498042?src=tsWpVHOeEdZJIZUQ1p9Ndw-1-39>

- The **Opening Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Est Ist Ein Ros 76 76 6 76, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

A great and mighty wonder, a full and holy cure:
The virgin bears the Infant with virgin honor pure!
Repeat the hymn again: “To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!”

The Word becomes incarnate and yet remains on high,
And cherubim sing anthems to shepherds from the sky.
Repeat the hymn again: “To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!”

- The **Invocation** is spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

P In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

- The **Confession and Absolution** is spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

P We confess our sin.

C Lord, we come before you in prayer today, asking for forgiveness. We have not loved as we ought to love, we have not given as we ought to give, and we have fallen short of the mark of truly being your obedient sons and daughters. We recognize our sins, and in this moment of silence, we privately remember our shortcomings in love and life.

(Silence for reflection and self-examination)

P God, our heavenly Father, hears the prayers of his children and answers those prayers. Our prayer for forgiveness is answered in the person of Jesus Christ, his Son, who died for our sin that we might have new life in him. To those who believe his Word of truth, he gives power to be the people of God. Praise God for His gift of love to us.

- The **Entrance Verses**, from Psalm 96, are spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

P Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.

C Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.

P Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

C For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.

P For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

C Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary.

P Ascribe to the Lord, O families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

C Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts.

P Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.

C Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns."

- The **Song of Reflection** is sung by the congregation to the tune Mendelssohn 77 77 D and refrain:

Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations, rise; join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic hosts proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

Christ, by highest heav’n adored, Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold him come, offspring of the virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

- The **Prayer of the Day** is spoken responsively by the pastor or other worship leader:

☐ We glorify you this day, Lord Jesus, and praise you for your birth in a manger so long ago. Help us keep returning to your manger today and every day in our minds that we might remember the miracle of what happened there. For through your manger birth, you declared to all the world that you were coming in humility and poverty that we might be rich through your salvation. Show us day by day how to serve others in humility that you might be glorified through our actions. Allow us to see in your manger scene that we have a God who loves the lowly and makes his power known through the least and the lost and the little. Open our eyes to the saving message that you came as one of us that we might dwell with you in the highest places of heaven forevermore through your sinless life and sacrificial death. Let your Gospel be born in us anew every morning. Amen.

- The **Children’s Message** is delivered by the pastor or other worship leader:

Needed: a dog bowl

☐ Merry Christmas, boys and girls. We all know that Jesus was born in a manger, right? We even sing “Away in a Manger” every Christmas, right? But what is a manger exactly? It was a feeding trough for the animals. It would be like putting a baby in a dog bowl like this one. (*Hold up the dog bowl.*) A dog bowl would not be the best place to put a baby, I wouldn’t think. They are smelly and messy and crusty with old food around the edges sometimes. You would not want to put your baby brother or sister in a dog bowl, would you?

But that is exactly what God did with Jesus. He put his only begotten Son, born of Mary, into a food box full of straw and saliva from all the animals in the stable that ate from it. Why did

God do that? He wanted to show the world that his Son did not have to be born in a castle or a fancy crib. He wanted to show the world that his Son had come to be one of us, a human being. We can be stinky and messy and dirty sometimes, too, especially when it comes to sin. We have the filth of sin all over us.

But God in his mercy sent his Son Jesus to wash the filth of sin away from us. He makes us clean again through his sinless death on the cross for us. We don't have to be stuck in sin anymore or left in a dog bowl. We have a special place prepared for us in heaven through the birth, life and death of Jesus.

Every time we see the manger (or maybe even a dog bowl), we can remember that Jesus came to a stinky, messy place that we might never be stinky and messy with sin again. What a beautiful message for us to remember and return to, not just on Christmas, but every day of our lives. Amen.

- The **Old Testament Reading**, Isaiah 52:7-10, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:
 - Ⓟ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.
- The **Epistle Reading**, Colossians 3:12-17, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:
 - Ⓟ Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- The **Hymn of Preparation** is sung by the congregation to the tune Gott Sei Dank 77 77, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Jesus! Name of wondrous love! Name all other names above!
Unto which must ev'ry knee bow in deep humility.

- The **Gospel Reading**, John 1:1-18, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

- The **Sermon Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Away in a Manger 11 11 11:

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay;
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes;
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray;
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
And take us to heaven to live with thee there.

- If desired, this **Motion Background** (purchased by you from Worship House Media: worshiphousemedia.com) is presented on a screen at this time for reflection:

<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/motion-backgrounds/27808/christmas-manger-clip-2>

- The **Sermon: From Returning to the Mall to Returning to the Manger** is delivered by the pastor:

P In the fourth Gospel's Christmas account, John has us return to the manger from a bigger, grander picture. There are huge comparisons between Genesis 1 and John 1. In a way, you could say that just as Genesis 2 and 3 gives us a more detailed, on-the-ground work of the story of creation, Matthew 1 and Luke 1-2 (and to a much lesser extent, Mark 1:1-8) give us the more detailed, on-the-ground view of Christmas, while John 1 takes the same event and sees it from the perspective of heaven looking down upon God's universe and specifically earth.

John uses a prevailing word and concept of the culture into which Christianity is born and takes root. The Greek *Logos*, or "Word," was the unifying power that united all of creation; while the Word of God is spoken, all comes into being, and even more powerful and awe-inspiring, the Word becomes flesh and makes his dwelling among us.

In this sense, John 1 takes us back to the manger but draws out the meaning of the events of Matthew 1 and Luke 1-2. For example:

- Gabriel's message to Mary and to Joseph through the dream is that this child will "be from of old" and be called Son of the most high. In John 1 the message is even clearer that this Word who became flesh was in the beginning and not only with God, but was God (John 1:1).
- Magi come to follow the star, and Herod is determined to put an end to this newborn king, but as John puts it: "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness could not overcome it" (John 1:5).
- The message of the angels was this: This day in the town of David a Savior has been born. In John 1 the Word and Light of the World enters our lives, and to those who believe, he gives the right to be children of God—born of God (John 1:12-13).
- In the message of the angels they say: "The Good News of great joy will be for all the people," while in John 1 it becomes clear that all the people does not equal all the Jewish

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Tune.....Antioch CM and refrain

Measures 1-5 of the piano accompaniment for 'Antioch CM and refrain'. The music is in C major and common time. The right hand features a melody of quarter notes and eighth notes, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

Measures 6-10 of the piano accompaniment. The right hand continues the melodic line with some chords, and the left hand maintains the accompaniment pattern.

Measures 11-15 of the piano accompaniment. The right hand has a more active melodic line with eighth notes, and the left hand continues with chords and single notes.

Measures 16-20 of the piano accompaniment. The right hand features a melodic line with some ties, and the left hand continues with chords and single notes.

- The **Closing Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Antioch CM and refrain:

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room, and heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n, and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found, far as, far as, the curse is found.

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.

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Sample

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CONTEMPORARY MUSIC SONG SUGGESTIONS

- The following song suggestions can be used for a more contemporary worship service in place of the more traditional hymns included in this kit. Rights to use these songs in the service must be purchased by your parish through CCLI or other copyright licensing agencies.

“My Soul Magnifies the Lord” by Chris Tomlin

“Angels We Have Heard on High” by Chris Tomlin

“Here I Am to Worship” by Tim Hughes

“God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen” by Jars of Clay

“O Come, O Come” by MercyMe

“You Are” by Mark Roach

“Away in a Manger” by Third Day or Casting Crowns

“What Child Is This” by Third Day or Casting Crowns