

Every day is Christmas Day

A journey through the Christmas Octave

25th December – 1st January



The Church sets aside eight days for the celebration of the Solemnity of the Birth of Jesus Christ:

The Christmas Octave

You may be attending Mass on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day or one of the other days during the Christmas Octave when each Mass is a Christmas Mass.

You may be just calling in to church to visit the Crib and a few minutes of personal prayer, or perhaps to light a candle for someone you know, or for the many people across the world who are unable to attend Mass at Christmas.

You may be at home, not able to venture out, or just keeping safe, celebrating with family and carers.

Whatever your circumstances, we hope that this booklet of readings, prayers and reflections will bring you joy, inspiration and comfort, and every blessing this Christmas.

The Christmas Octave

Day 1 – Christmas Day - *the Nativity of Our Lord*

Day 2 – Feast of St Stephen – *the First Martyr*

Day 3 – The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Day 4 – The Holy Innocents

Day 5 – St Thomas Becket – *Bishop and Martyr*

Day 6 – *6th Day in Octave of Christmas*

Day 7 – *7th Day in Octave of Christmas*

Day 8 – Mary, The Holy Mother of God – *Solemnity,
The Octave Day of the Nativity of Our Lord*

Praying the Octave

For each day

bring yourself into the presence of Our Lord, in church or may be in a quiet 'prayer corner' at home, perhaps with a candle and a Crib. Start with the sign of the Cross.....

Opening Prayer

Short Reading from Scripture

A reflection from Pope Francis' *Admirabile Signum*

A closing prayer

A suggested Activity

*'Admirabile Signum' – Apostolic Letter from Pope Francis on the
Meaning and Importance of the Nativity Scene.*

This booklet and additional materials are also available online at:

<https://rcdow.org.uk/faith/news/every-day-is-christmas---a-journey-through-the-christmas-octave-2020/>

24TH DECEMBER CHRISTMAS EVE



In the name of the Father.....

OPENING PRAYER

Hail Christmas Night! As darkness gives way to the light of the star and the glory of angels; and the Virgin gives birth to the child in a stable; let us ponder with Mary on the wonder of her Son. May God open our hearts to Jesus, the everlasting light that overcomes all darkness.

SCRIPTURE

Read from the Gospel of Luke, 2:1-14: *'The time came for Mary to have her child, and she gave birth to a son.'* For a few moments, reflect on this wonderful event. When Mary said 'Yes' to God's plan for her and the world, she could not have guessed in what circumstances she would be having her son; but in the strangeness of the stable, Mary's thoughts are only for her new baby, God's precious Son.

ADMIRABILE SIGNUM

Pope Francis tells us: 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.

CLOSING PRAYER

We pray for mothers and newly-born babies, their families and those who care for them. We pray especially for those who find themselves in difficult circumstances during this Christmas.

O God, we thank you for the light, which banishes all darkness, that first shone from a stable in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago. We pray that the light will continue to shine on new mothers and their babies, and in our homes this night, and that fearful shadows of this world are banished, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen

ACTIVITY

Light an extra candle for someone you know who has recently had a baby, or who is having difficulty at this time.

25TH DECEMBER – DAY 1

CHRISTMAS DAY



In the name of the Father.....

OPENING PRAYER

Grant almighty God, that as we are bathed in the new radiance of the birth of your Son Jesus, who restores our human dignity, may we come to share in his divinity.

SCRIPTURE

Read from the Gospel of Luke 2:15-20: *‘So they hurried away and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Everyone was astonished at what the shepherds had to say.’* Let us be astonished too - a baby born in a stable. Seemingly more astonishing is that God sent his Son into our world, born in poverty, greeted first by the poorest.

ADMIRABILE SIGNUM

Pope Francis tells us: *Unlike so many other people, busy about many things, the shepherds become the first to see the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation. It is the humble and the poor who greet the event of the Incarnation. The shepherds respond to God who comes to meet us in the Infant Jesus by setting out to meet him with love, gratitude and awe.*

CLOSING PRAYER

In these troubled times, we pray for those trapped in poverty, and for those in social services and charities who work with the poor. O God, we thank you for sending your Son Jesus into the world as our Saviour. We pray that we will always reach out to the poor, through whom we come to know the new born Christ, who humbled himself to become one of us

ACTIVITY

You may like to say this grace before your Christmas meal:

*“Love brought our Saviour, born in a stable,
Love brings us here around this table.
We give thanks for Jesus and his mother,
For the gift of food and each other. Amen”*

26TH DECEMBER – DAY 2

FEAST OF ST STEPHEN



In the name of the Father.....

OPENING PRAYER

Fill us with your Spirit Lord, that we may follow St Stephen, first among martyrs, in learning to serve, and to forgive those who persecute us.

SCRIPTURE

Read from the Acts of the Apostles, 6:8-10,7:54-59: *'I can see heaven thrown open and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God,then they all rushed at him, sent him out of the city and stoned him'.*

It may be that we are never called to witness to our faith in such dangerous circumstances as Stephen did, but there will be many times when we will need courage to speak out, to serve the poor, to share the word of the Lord, and to forgive those who seek to harm us.

ADMIRABLE SIGNUM

Pope Francis tells us: *'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.'*

CLOSING PRAYER

We pray for those Christians through the world who suffer for their faith, and for the missionaries who support them. We pray for the Church in countries where it faces persecution and intolerance. O God, we thank you for St Stephen; may his example of service and witness inspire us to serve those in need, to always be true disciples, and to be messengers of your Gospel.

ACTIVITY

Tie a ribbon to your Christmas Tree, as a sign of solidarity for all those Christians, and people of other faiths, through the world who are persecuted for their beliefs.

27TH DECEMBER – DAY 3

THE HOLY FAMILY

OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH



In the name of the Father.....

OPENING PRAYER

Through your grace O Lord, may we strive to follow the example of the Holy Family, to live in love for those closest to us, to always respond to their love, and to provide mutual support and comfort.

SCRIPTURE

Read from the Gospel of St Luke 2:22-40 ‘...my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel’. Christ is at the heart of the family, which is at the heart of the Church.

ADMIRABILE SIGNUM

Pope Francis tells us: ‘*The birth of a child awakens joy and wonder; it sets before us the great mystery of life. Seeing the bright eyes of a young couple gazing at their newborn child, we can understand the feelings of Mary and Joseph who, as they looked at the Infant Jesus, sensed God’s presence in their lives.*

CLOSING PRAYER

We pray for all families especially those who are experiencing difficulties at this time. We pray for victims of domestic abuse. O God, we thank you for the Holy Family. May we in our own family, imitate them in lives of faith, hope and love, and so come to share in their company for ever.

ACTIVITY

Gather around your Crib to say this blessing: “*God of all creation, you sent your Son Jesus, born of Mary, to be our Saviour, who brings us peace and joy. Lord, bless all who gaze upon this crib. Through the prayers of Mary and Joseph, may we always raise our thoughts to Jesus, our Emmanuel, who lives and reigns for ever. Amen*”

28TH DECEMBER – DAY 4

THE HOLY INNOCENTS



In the name of the Father.....

OPENING PRAYER

In their silence, the Holy Innocents witness the birth of Jesus; may we be courageous in defending the innocent from cruelty in this world.

SCRIPTURE

Read from the Gospel of St Matthew 2:13-18: *‘the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape to Egypt,”*. On the run, travelling day and night, escaping from violence in their own country, the Holy Family are to be refugees in a foreign land. In times of war and social upheaval, we may ask where is God? He is there, with his family, with his people, a refugee also.

ADMIRABILE SIGNUM

Pope Francis tells us: ‘At Mary’s side, shown protecting the Child and his Mother, stands Saint Joseph. He is usually depicted with staff in hand, or holding up a lamp. Saint Joseph plays an important role in the life of Jesus and Mary. He is the guardian who tirelessly protects his family. When God warned him of Herod’s threat, he did not hesitate to set out and flee to Egypt.’

CLOSING PRAYER

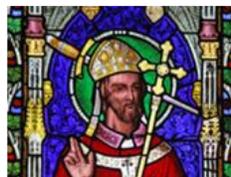
We pray for expectant mothers, especially those who are experiencing difficulties. We pray for mothers with newly born babies.

O God, who welcomes all children, and calls on us to follow their lead in being open to the love that Jesus offers, fill us with your Holy Spirit so that our hearts are filled with love for the innocent.

ACTIVITY

Pray together a decade of the Holy Rosary for all mothers to be, new mothers, for midwives and for all who are responsible for the care of the unborn and the newly born.

29TH DECEMBER – DAY 5



FEAST OF ST THOMAS BECKET

In the name of the Father.....

OPENING PRAYER

As St Thomas Becket sought justice, giving up his life to God's will, let us be courageous in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURE

Read from the Gospel of St Luke 22:24-30: *'...the greatest among you must behave as if he were the youngest, the leader as if he were the one who serves.'* It is 850 years since the death of St Thomas Becket, who, when an ordained deacon, was appointed by King Henry II to be Chancellor of England. He was later ordained as priest and then Archbishop of Canterbury, and resigned as Chancellor. He underwent a surprising conversion, leading an ascetic lifestyle with prayer and humility. This brought him into conflict with the King, which led to his murder. He quickly became widely venerated as a Saint across Europe, and is Patron of Parish Clergy. St Thomas is an example for all those in public service who look to keep God's will at the heart of their work.

ADMIRABLE SIGNUM

Pope Francis tells us: *'the nativity scene has invited us to "feel" and "touch" the poverty that God's Son took upon himself in the Incarnation. Implicitly, it summons us to follow him along the path of humility, poverty and self-denial that leads from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross. It asks us to meet him and serve him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need'*

CLOSING PRAYER

We pray for bishops, priests and deacons. St Thomas, support us in our prayers for those who lead us through the trials of life, as we journey towards the joys of the next, revealed to us by Jesus born in a stable.

ACTIVITY

Keep the priests and deacons of your parish in your prayers; during this week, make a point of thanking them for all their work.

30TH DECEMBER – DAY 6



6TH DAY IN OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

In the name of the Father.....

OPENING PRAYER

Father, you raise men and women to lead religious lives; may we be inspired by their example, and in humility always be at the service of your Son, Jesus Christ, born in a stable.

SCRIPTURE

Read from the Gospel of St Luke 2:36-40: *‘There was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.....she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem’*. In a world of heightened activity, it can be that older people are ‘left behind’. Yet, the challenges and joys of many years can bring wisdom. Old age, even with all its difficulties is a treasure not to be overlooked. And for those who lead quiet, religious lives, we should not be deceived into thinking they are far from reality; indeed, in their holy devotion they are journeying through life no less than we are; and through their prayers accompanying us in our daily lives.

ADMIRABLE SIGNUM

Pope Francis tells us: *‘The Magi teach us that people can come to Christ by a very long route. Men of wealth, sages from afar, athirst for the infinite, they set out on the long and perilous journey that would lead them to Bethlehem.’*

CLOSING PRAYER

We pray for the elderly, those with dementia and their carers. We pray for all those in Religious Life. We pray for all those who seek meaning in their life. O God, whose Angels led the shepherds to the stable, and whose star guided the Wiseman from the east; may we always journey to the Christ-child, who shows the way to everlasting joy in heaven.

ACTIVITY

If you are able, place some food items in the foodbank collection; or parcel some clothes to be taken to the local charity shop.



31ST DECEMBER – DAY 7

7TH DAY IN OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

In the name of the Father.....

OPENING PRAYER

In this time of pandemic when a new darkness has covered the earth, we pray for all the sick, for their carers, and for those who deliver medicines and vaccines; may they always be led by the light of Christ, whom our Heavenly Father sent to Bethlehem to heal the world.

SCRIPTURE

Read from the Gospel of St John 1:1-18: *‘All that came to be had life in him and that life was the light of men, a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower’.*

At our baptism, we are given a candle, with the words. ‘Receive the light of Christ...walk always as a child of the light’. And this is from where light comes: a lowly stable. It is a light, that through our words and lives, can become radiant too in the lives of all those we meet.

ADMIRABLE SIGNUM

Pope Francis tells us, *‘We can think of all those times in our lives when we have experienced the darkness of night. Yet even then, God does not abandon us, but is there to answer our crucial questions about the meaning of life. Who am I? Where do I come from? Why was I born at this time in history? Why do I love? Why do I suffer? Why will I die? It was to answer these questions that God became man. His closeness brings light where there is darkness and shows the way to those dwelling in the shadow of suffering’.*

CLOSING PRAYER

May Christ whose glory fills the skies fill you with his light, scatter the darkness from your path, gladden your eyes, warm your heart and guide your feet into the way of peace, this Christmas and always.

Amen.

ACTIVITY

If you are able, go for a walk in the open air, or sit at a window looking at the sky, or listen to the birds singing. Thank God for all his blessings.

1ST – JANUARY 2021 - DAY 8
**SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY
MOTHER OF GOD**



In the name of the Father.....

OPENING PRAYER

O God, we thank you for Mary, mother of your Son Jesus, and our mother. May we, like Mary, be faithful to your calling, and come in the fullness of time to be with her and her Son in everlasting life.

SCRIPTURE

Read from the Gospel of St Luke 2:16-21: *‘The shepherds hurried away to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds had to say. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.’*

ADMIRABILE SIGNUM

Pope Francis tells us: *‘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.’*

CLOSING PRAYER

May the humility of the Shepherds, the perseverance of the Wise Men, the joy of the Angels, the love of the Holy Family, and the peace of the Christ Child be God’s gifts to us this Christmas and always. Amen.

ACTIVITY

Celebrate our Christmas Octave with a special meal. Fill the room with lights, decorations and flowers. Fill the home with joy!

“I invite you to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas in your homes. Please ensure that you have a crib in a prominent place in your home. Gather round it as we approach this great Feast and say some prayers with your family and in your ‘bubbles’. Give your decorations a touch of the Christmas story: some joyful angels, a prominent star, gift parcels from the wise men. Try to make this Advent and Christmas a family festival of the birth of Jesus, a time when faith finds fresh expression in your homes. To do this will bring rich rewards.”

Cardinal Vincent Nichols



Nativity scene at Westminster Cathedral

This booklet, and additional materials are also available online at:

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Diocese of Westminster

AGENCY FOR EVANGELISATION

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