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## BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS CRÛCHE OR MANGER SCENE

The manger scene has a special place near the Christmas tree or in another place where family members can reflect and pray during the Christmas season. It is blessed each year on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

*All make the sign of the cross. The leader begins:*

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

*All respond:*

Who made heaven and earth.

*The leader may use these or similar words to introduce the blessing.*

We are at the beginning of the days of Christmas. All through the season we will look on these images of sheep and cattle, of shepherds, of Mary and of Joseph and Jesus.

*Then the Scripture is read:*

Listen to the words of the holy gospel according to Luke:

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, 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

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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.

—Luke 2:1-7

*The reader concludes:*

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

*All respond:*

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*The figures may be placed in the manger. After a time of silence, all join in prayers of intercession and in the Lord's Prayer.*

*Then the leader invites:*

Pray now for God's blessing as we look on these figures.

*After a short silence, the leader prays:*

A 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.

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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 Savior of all,  
and who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
R. Amen.

Or:

B God of Mary and Joseph, of shepherds and animals,  
bless us whenever we gaze on this manger scene.  
Through all the days of Christmas  
may these figures tell the story  
of how humans, angels, and animals  
found the Christ in this poor place.  
Fill our house with hospitality, joy,  
gentleness, and thanksgiving  
and guide our steps in the way of peace.

Grant this through Christ our Lord.  
R. Amen.

*The leader says:*

Let us bless the Lord.

*All respond, making the sign of the cross:*

Thanks be to God.

*Then Christmas songs and carols are sung like* It Came Upon  
the Midnight Clear.