



St Beuno's Outreach in the Diocese of Wrexham
wishes you a Blessed Christmas
and a Happy New Year

Deo Gratias!

Adam lay bound, bound in a bond,
Four thousand winters thought he not too long;

Deo Gratias!

And all was for an apple, an apple that he took,
As clerks find written, written in their book.

Deo Gratias!

Had not the apple taken been, the apple taken been,
Never had Our Lady been heaven's Queen.

Blessed be the time that apple taken was:
Therefore we may sing

Deo Gratias!

15th Century Anon.

*Your next Prego (for the Baptism of the Lord)
will be available on Friday 4 January 2019*



ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH
IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

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CHRISTMASTIDE

DECEMBER 2018 TO JANUARY 2019



This Christmastide, as always, we invite you to pray with the beautiful, familiar texts of the Gospel. Alongside them, you may also like to reflect this year on five early Christmas carol texts, all inspired by Scripture passages dealing with some aspect of the Nativity. Most were written between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries in either English or Latin, and all were set to music by the composer Benjamin Britten for his *Ceremony of Carols* (1942), for choristers and harp.

Welcome, Welcome,
Welcome to You, our heavenly King.
Welcome, you who was born one morning,
Welcome, for You, shall we sing! ...

Welcome you that are here,
Welcome all and make good cheer.
Welcome all another year!

14th century Anon.

Christmas Vigil Mass (evening of 24 December)

Matthew 1: 18–25

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel', a name which means "God-is-with-us". When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home and, though he had not had intercourse with her, she gave birth to a son; and he named him Jesus.

It may not be easy in this very busy period to find a time and place to pray. Maybe all I can do is mull over one or two lines from the ancient Latin chant *Hodie*, and use them as a mantra as I get on with all my activities: 'Today Christ is born ... Glory to God in the highest!'

If life is quieter and I have more time, I read the Gospel text slowly, trying to imagine what these days must have been like for Joseph and for Mary. I may also think of all the other circumstances surrounding the birth ... the trip to Bethlehem, the stable, the first cries of the baby, the shepherds ...

I stay with these different scenes. Which one touches me in particular?

In what way do they relate to my own life, to my family?

I ponder and then speak to the Lord, simply, from my heart.

Perhaps I am drawn to think of all the babies born in similar, poor, uncomfortable circumstances throughout the world tonight. I entrust them and their parents to the Lord, knowing that he supports and loves them unconditionally.

To conclude my prayer, I thank God for sending his Son to us:

Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Behold, a simple tender babe,
In freezing winter night,
In homely manger trembling lies.
Alas, a piteous sight!

The inns are full; no man will yield
This little pilgrim bed.
But forced he is with simple beasts
In crib to shroud his head.

This stable is a Prince's court,
This crib his chair of State;
The beasts are parcel of his pomp,
The wooden dish his plate.

The persons in that poor attire
His royal liveries wear;
The Prince himself is come from heav'n;
This pomp is prizèd there.

With joy approach, O Christian soul,
Do homage to thy King.
And highly praise his humble pomp,
which he from Heav'n doth bring.

St Robert Southwell S.J. (1561–1595)



Giotto, Lower Church, Assisi, 14th c.

The Feast of the Epiphany (6 January)

Matthew 2: 9–12

Having listened to what the King had to say, the wise men set out. And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward, and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. But they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.

The mad Christmas rush may have subsided a little. Maybe finding a quiet time to pray has become easier. I go to my preferred place and settle down. Perhaps I can light a candle to remind me of the light of the star guiding the wise men.

I read the text, perhaps several times. I try to enter into the scene. I see the people, the baby; I hear their voices, his crying for food. I smell the warmth of the stable and the animals; I touch the rough wood of the manger. What feelings arise in me?
I remain there, silently watching.

What treasures do these men have in their coffers? As they open them and offer the contents to the child, I look in amazement. I ponder.

What did Mary and Joseph think of it all? Strangers doing homage to their baby with gold fit for a king and frankincense to worship him ... but what about myrrh, the spice for death and mourning?

I turn to the Father and tell him how I feel. I speak to him freely about what is in my heart, about Mary and Joseph in this bewildering situation.

Maybe now I focus once again on the wise men.

They were delighted when they arrived. How do they feel as they start back on their journey home? Were they somehow changed by their encounter with 'The Prince himself come from heaven', as the Jesuit martyr Robert Southwell describes him? Once again I ponder.

In time, 'With joy, I approach ... and do homage to my King', then I conclude my prayer:

Thanks be to God! Deo gratias!



Giovanni dal Ponte, Florence, c. 1410

Hodie Christus natus est:
Hodie Salvator apparuit:
hodie in terra canunt angeli:
laetantur archangeli:
hodie exsultant justi dicentes:
Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Alleluia!

*Today Christ was born:
today the Saviour appeared:
today on earth the angels sing:
the archangels rejoice:
today the righteous celebrate saying:
'Glory to God in the highest.
Alleluia!'*

You can listen to a recording of
A Ceremony of Carols sung by St John's
College, Cambridge, [here](#).

Where the meaning of the original text is a little obscure, a modern English paraphrase or translation is supplied here.



The Feast of the Holy Family (Sunday after Christmas)

Luke 2: 41–52

Every year the parents of Jesus used to go to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up for the feast as usual. When they were on their way home after the feast, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents knowing it. They assumed he was with the caravan, and it was only after a day's journey that they went to look for him among their relations and acquaintances. When they failed to find him they went back to Jerusalem looking for him everywhere. Three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the doctors, listening to them, and asking them questions; and all those who heard him were astounded at his intelligence and his replies. They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, 'My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.' 'Why were you looking for me?' he replied. 'Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?' But they did not understand what he meant.

Jesus then went down with them and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men.

Before starting my prayer, I take a few deep breaths, then breathe normally, conscious of the life-giving air filling my lungs. Full of gratitude for this gift of God, I turn my attention to the text above and read it slowly and prayerfully.

What strikes me as I imagine the everyday life of the Holy Family?

Does it bring to mind instances in my own life?

I speak to the Lord about any similar incidents with my children or grandchildren, my nephews and nieces, or my young neighbours.

Maybe I was the difficult adolescent?

I read the story again. I try to experience the initial relaxed response of Mary and Joseph ... then their worry, followed by relief ... and eventually puzzlement at their son's apparent lack of concern.

How does it make me feel?

I may want to pray for all parents who struggle to come to terms with their rebellious children. I entrust them to the Lord and to his mother, whom the poet compares to a virtuous rose. I conclude my prayer:

Gloria in excelsis deo! Gaudeamus!



Santa Maria di Gesù, Rabat, Malta

There is no rose of such virtue
As is the rose that bore Jesu.

Alleluia!

For in this rose containèd was
Heaven and earth in little space,
Res miranda. [*A wondrous thing!*]

By that rose we may well see
There be one God in persons three,
Pares forma. [*Equal in nature.*]

The angels sang to the shepherds:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Gaudeamus. [*Let us rejoice!*]

Leave we all this worldly mirth,
And follow we this joyful birth.

Transeamus. [*Let us go there!*]

14th Century Anon.