

Liturgy of the Crib from Killaloe Diocese

Liturgy of the Crib: Christmas Eve (6 p.m.?)

Setting: This liturgy takes place near the crib in the church. People are invited to gather around the crib at home.

Opening Song: A suitable Christmas Carol, (possibly one that is included in the *Grow in Love* Programme) is sung.

Leader: Words of Welcome & Introduction

Warmly welcome everyone who is watching at home. Include those who are at home for Christmas and remember those we miss who are unable to be with us.

Then invite people to gather around the crib in these or similar words:

If you have a crib at home, I invite you to gather around the crib as we are doing in the Church. Here at the crib we are at the heart of the Christmas story, a story of wonder and invitation.

I'm going to ask you to do something a bit different. I invite you to take out some of the crib figures so that we can think a little about them. Take out Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus and the shepherds. See if you can each hold one of these figures in your hand or if you can place them on the table beside the crib. We will leave the animals in for now. Have you taken out the figures? Right? Have you shared them out? Great. We are ready to begin.

Person 1 comes forward and stands beside the figure of Mary in the church crib (or pointing to Mary in the Church crib). Person 1 says:

This is the mother, Mary. She was a very ordinary woman, from a very ordinary town and a very ordinary family. Not an obvious choice to be the mother of Jesus. Yet God chose Mary to give birth to a baby who would change the world for everyone.

Leader: Invite those at home to look at the Mary figure.

What kind of person was Mary?

Place the Mary figure in the crib.

Who does this figure remind you of?

Let's take a moment to think about that.

Person 2 comes forward and stands beside the Joseph figure in the church crib.

This is the father, Joseph, who supported Mary on the long journey to Bethlehem where the child Jesus was born. Joseph wasn't a rich or famous man. He came from a little-known village called Nazareth. Joseph shows us that God isn't interested in whether we are rich or famous. God welcomes everyone no matter who we are.

Leader: *Invite those at home to look at the Joseph figure.
What kind of person was Joseph?
Now place the Joseph figure in the crib.
Who does this figure remind you of?
Let's be quiet for a moment to think about this.*

Leader: *We are going to listen now to the story of the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. We will hear how Jesus came to be born.*

Reader: *A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke¹*

At that time, the emperor issued a decree for a census of the whole empire to be taken...Everyone had to be registered in his own town. So, everyone set out for his own city. Joseph, too, set out from Nazareth of Galilee. As he belonged to the family of David, being a descendant of his, he went to Judea, to David's town of Bethlehem, to be registered with Mary, his wife, who was with child. They were in Bethlehem when the time came for her to have her child; and she gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in torn rags, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Person 3 comes forward carrying the figure of the baby Jesus.

This is Jesus, the Son of God, born for us in Bethlehem. God comes to us as a little baby to let us know how close God is to every person.

Notice how the little baby opens his arms to welcome us, to reach out to us, to embrace us. *(Place the figure of the baby Jesus in the crib).*

Leader: *Invite those at home to place the figure of the baby Jesus in the crib.
Invite them to take a moment to look at the figure and to notice how the child is reaching out to us with open arms.*

Person 4 comes forward and stands beside one of the shepherd figures in the crib.

If you had good news to share, who would you tell it to first?
Who would you invite to the celebration?
Family? Neighbours? Friends?
Well, God invited the least likely people
to be the first to hear about the birth of Jesus.
They were people who were looked down on, shepherds.
They worked in the fields, often at night. Men used to living rough.
The shepherds show us that it's not the people in high places
who are important to God.

¹ I've taken this from the Christian Community Bible. Should it be from the children's bible?

All of us, no matter who we are or where we come from, are important in God's eyes.

Leader: *Invite those at home to place the shepherd figures in the crib around the manger.
Now let's just look at them as we listen to the story of how they heard the news of Jesus' birth.*²

Reader: *A continuation of the Gospel story as told by Luke*³
There were shepherds camping in the countryside, taking turns to watch over their flocks by night. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared to them, with the glory of the Lord shining around them. As they were terrified, the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid; I am here to give you good news, great joy for all the people. Today, a Saviour has been born to you in David's town; he is the Messiah and the Lord. Let this be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in torn rags and lying in a manger." Suddenly, the angel was surrounded by many more heavenly spirits, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and Peace, on earth, to those whom God loves."⁴

Leader: *Encourage those at home to imagine that the words of the angel are spoken to each of us: "Don't be afraid: I am here to give you good news, great joy for all the people. Today a Saviour has been born for us..." Today, God has come to us as a tiny baby. Today, Jesus, God-with-us, is born.*

Person 5: *(Standing near one of the shepherds).*
The angels' words gave the shepherds courage so they said 'Let's "go as far as Bethlehem, and see." So they came, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. They told Mary & Joseph what the angels had told them and they gave praise and thanks to God for the birth of this child, Jesus.

Leader: *Notice how the shepherds look at Jesus. Some are kneeling, some are standing but all of them are looking at Jesus.*
Like the shepherds we too are around the manger. We too have come to see. We too are full of joy for the gift of this child. With the shepherds we sing a song of joy and praise.

Carol: **O Come All Ye Faithful**

² Would it be better to have a carol here rather than another reading e.g. While Shepherds Watched ...

³ What biblical text should we use here?

Leader: *Now to end this time around the crib, I am going to bless the crib with holy water (and I invite all of you at home to do the same).*

As I bless this crib, I pray that it will be a place where people will come to know God's love for them through this child in the manger. May they know that God comes to welcome and embrace us.

I pray a blessing on all of you watching at home and on your families, near and far.

*May you know the peace that the angels announced to the shepherds and may the joy of God's coming among us in Jesus, fill your hearts.
+ in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen*

All of us here in the parish wish all of you a very happy Christmas.

Carol: **A suitable Christmas carol is chosen to end this time of prayer.**