

800<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF GRECCIO  
A SPECIAL CHRISTMAS PREPARATION



BUON NATALE

FELIZ NAVIDAD

CHÚC MING  
GIÁNG SINH

메리크리스마  
MELI  
KEULISEUMÆSEU

MERRY CHRISTMAS



Mission San Luis Rey Parish  
Serra Center



Immaculate Conception  
Old Town



# CHRISTMAS: "THE FEAST OF FEASTS"



## SAN DIEGO CELEBRATES THE 800<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF GRECCIO

November 16, 2023

6:30 pm

Immaculate Conception  
Old Town San Diego

November 18, 2023

10:30 am

Mission San Luis Rey  
Oceanside

# OPENING HYMN: LOVE IS THE REASON, VS. 1, 2, 3

## Verses

Cathy Tisel Nelson



1. Long a - go in Beth - le - hem, the
2. Why did God de - sire to make a
3. As we pon - der such a gift, the
4. Now may Christ dwell in our hearts, and



Word came to birth, hum - ble, poor, and  
home with us here, walk with us and  
mys - t'ry un - folds. Christ was first in  
be born a - gain, in the mer - cy



vul - n'ra - ble, yet ra - dian't with light.  
tru - ly know our sor - rows and joys,  
God's in - tent be - fore time be - gan,  
that we show to all those in need.



Why did God em - brace our flesh, be - come one of us?  
pour out Self so gen - 'rous - ly as free won - drous gift?  
fill - ing all the u - ni - verse, ex - ult - ing with joy:  
May com - pas - sion be our way, so all can re - joice:

## Refrain



Love is the rea - son, ex - trav - a - gant love,



end - less, a - bun - dant, ex - trav - a - gant love.

## OPENING PRAYER

Loving Creator God, as we gather together united in one heart and mind, help us recognize our glorious diversity and our courageous inclusivity - knowing that all are welcome at the crib of your Son. May our time in Greccio [this evening/ morning] and all our Greccios to come, help us to see the manifestation of your love in the incarnational presence of our brother Jesus. Francis longed to show the depth of your love to all people. In creating the live nativity on the rocky, wooded hillside near Greccio, Italy, he gave witness to your humility in becoming one of us. For Francis, the gift of God's birth in the stable was the most profound expression of God's unconditional love for each one of us. And so, Francis called this feast, THE FEAST OF FEASTS!

As we ponder the mystery of God's birth in our midst, let us awaken the joy of knowing that we too are called to give birth to God's presence in our world. This we pray in the name of the One who gathers us, abides with us, and loves us more than we can imagine.

**ALL:** Amen.



## READING 1

**ALL:** We adore you, O Christ and we praise you for by your holy birth you have redeemed the world.

**TODOS:** Te adoramos, O Cristo, y te bendecimos porque por tu santo nacimiento redimiste al mundo.

“Someone to love, someone to care for. It was that thought which gripped his heart at Greccio that Christmas Saint Francis had decided to celebrate the Birth of Jesus in a new way. He has brought a real ox and ass to the altar so that they, too, could share in this rebirth of Christ in the bread and wine of the Christmas Eucharist.”

At Christmas it was the infant Christ who was born again in human hearts, and it struck Francis that God came to earth as a baby so that we would have someone to care for. Christmas was the dearest of feasts because it meant that God was now one of us. Flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, this child we could approach without fear. We could be silly and uninhibited as we sought to make the babe laugh. We could be totally ourselves, because a child accepts us just as we are and screams with delight at our little performances in his or her behalf.”

## HYMN: SILENT NIGHT, vs. 1

Silent Night, Holy Night, all is calm, all is bright.  
Round yon virgin mother & child, Holy Infant so tender and mild.  
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Noche de paz, noche de amor; todo duerme en derredor.  
Entre los astros que esparcen su luz  
Bella anunciando al niño Jesús,  
Brilla la estrella de paz,  
Brilla la estrella de paz.

## READING 2

**ALL:** We adore you, O Christ and we praise you for by your holy birth you have redeemed the world.

**TODOS:** Te adoramos, O Cristo, y te bendecimos porque por tu santo nacimiento redimiste al mundo.

“Someone to care for, someone to try to please, someone to love. God, a helpless babe; God, a piece of Bread, [the Bread of Life]. How much trust God has in creatures! In the Eucharist and in the Nativity, we grow up because God places Godself in our care. We come out of ourselves if we are aware because now we have responsibilities for God. Not only the earth to till and creation to care for, but now God to care for.”

## HYMN: O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, vs. 1

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep & dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;  
Yet in the dark street shineth the everlasting light.  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.



Basilica di Santa Maria Degli Angeli  
Assisi



## READING 3

**ALL:** We adore you, O Christ and we praise you for by your holy birth you have redeemed the world.

**TODOS:** Te adoramos, O Cristo, y te bendecimos porque por tu santo nacimiento redimiste al mundo.

“So strong was Francis’ desire to love, that at that Christmas Mass at Greccio, the babe of Bethlehem appeared to him alive and smiling on the cold rock. And he took the babe into his arms and held it to his heart, and the child was warm and soft. Francis’ virginity was made fruitful in this child he held to his breast. He had no child but Jesus himself. His Lord had reversed the roles for him and for all who need someone to love, someone to care for.”

## HYMN: AWAY IN A MANGER, vs. 1

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



La Sagrada Familia  
Barcelona, Spain



## READING 4

**ALL:** We adore you, O Christ and we praise you for by your holy birth  
you have redeemed the world.

**TODOS:** Te adoramos, O Cristo, y te bendecimos porque por tu santo  
nacimiento redimiste al mundo.

“The peasants at that Mass had witnessed Francis’ fatherhood, and the child became theirs as well. They had brought torches for their midnight journey from the village on the hill opposite the brothers’ hermitage. But they did not need them for the journey home that night, so brightly did their own hearts burn that God had truly been enfleshed in the babe at the altar. Francis was so happy for them. These simple folk from Greccio were like children themselves, and God had once again been revealed to little ones.”

## HYMN: GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN, vs. 3

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills & everywhere;  
Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!  
Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,  
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.



New York's Metropolitan Museum

## READING 5

**ALL:** We adore you, O Christ and we praise you for by your holy birth  
you have redeemed the world.

**TODOS:** Te adoramos, O Cristo, y te bendecimos porque por tu santo  
nacimiento redimiste al mundo.

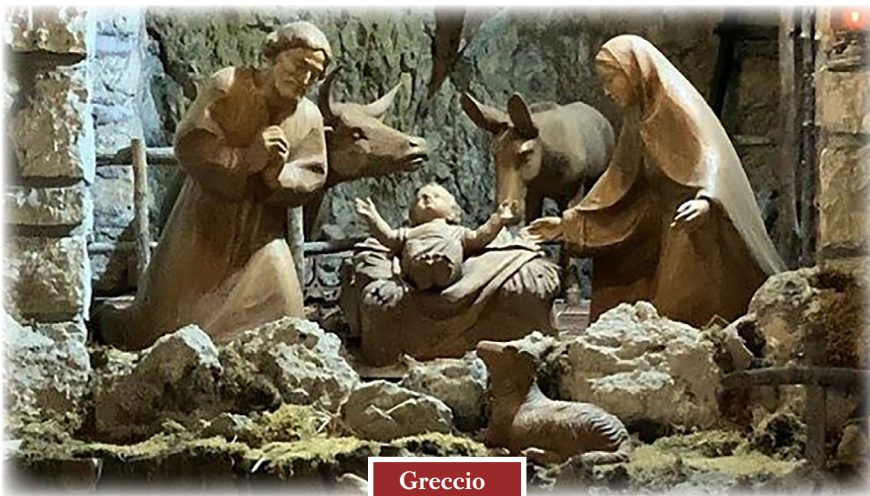
“Someone to love. That was Greccio. [Saint Francis] prayed for all  
the lonely people of the world that they would understand what  
God’s enfleshment meant to them personally. God was like us now  
in everything but sin. And God, in Jesus, let himself be touched and  
handled by everyone who would come to him. Someone to care for,  
someone to touch. That was Greccio; that was God become human.”

### HYMN: ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH, VS 3

Come to Bethlehem & see Him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

Glo—ri-a ..... in excelsis Deo.

Glo---ri-a..... in excelsis De--o.



## READING 6

**ALL:** We adore you, O Christ and we praise you for by your holy birth  
you have redeemed the world.

**TODOS:** Te adoramos, O Cristo, y te bendecimos porque por tu santo  
nacimiento redimiste al mundo.

“Francis left Greccio that year with a new heart, for the brothers would  
keep alive the custom of celebrating Christmas in that fashion. And the  
people of Greccio would spread the word to the next village, and from  
there it would cover the whole of Italy and maybe the world.

Someday, perhaps, all people could look into the altar creche at  
Christmas and know they had someone special to love, someone divine  
to care for. And they would begin anew to love.”

## HYMN: HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING, VS 3

Hail the heav'n born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings, Ris'n with healing in his wings.

Mild he lays his glory by, Born that we no more may die,  
Born to raise each child of earth,  
Born to give us second birth.

Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”



Caltigirone  
Sicily



**REFLECTION:** Father Michael Blastic, OFM

## **BLESSING OF THE CRIB AND FIGURES FROM HOME**

*People process to the crib for their Blessing Card and Straw.*

### **HYMN: THE FIRST NOEL**

## **COMMISSIONING OF PARTICIPANTS**

### **PRAYER LEADER:**

As we conclude our time together, we welcome all to participate in a special sending forth.

### **PRAYER LEADER CONTINUES:**

God of the Journey, we invoke Your holy name as we send all in this place back to their homes where they will celebrate the Christmas feast. Send your Spirit upon them to take up their task of service rooted in Gospel love.

And so we ask you, loving God:

**SIDE 1:** Send us forth now as You sent the Angels, to announce the good news, the news forever new: Your birth and incarnation that saves all people!

**SIDE 2:** Send us forth as You sent the shepherds, to spread the Good News of salvation among the poor and lowly.

**SIDE 1:** Send us forth as you sent the Magi, the Wise Adorers, to places likely and unlikely, to the powerful and the powerless, to embrace every person and all creation as brother and sister!

**SIDE 2:** Send us forth as you sent Anna and Simeon, to dedicate our lives to your service and to see your face in every person we encounter.

**ALL:** Send us forth as you sent Francis and Clare,  
to be instruments of your peace, love, and joy.  
Send us to those who love, to those who fear,  
to those who are different and those who are ignored,  
that we may birth love where there is no love and  
bring forth the Reign of God in our day!

**TODOS:** Envíanos como tú enviaste a Francisco y Clara, para ser instrumentos  
de tú paz, amor, y alegría.  
Envíanos a los que aman, a los que temen, a los que son diferentes y a los que  
son ignorados, para que podamos hacer nacer el amor donde no hay amor, y  
para hacer nacer el reino de Dios en nuestros días.

**PRAYER LEADER:** O loving God, as we celebrate this jubilant feast of the  
Nativity, fill us with the light of your presence. By our words and actions may  
we, in turn, be light for all who do not know your great gift, Jesus. May our  
hearts be filled with gratitude for the great gift of your presence among us and  
may we always welcome you into our lives, God-with-us forever. May we make  
our way to you and live with you forever in the glory you have intended for us  
from all eternity. **AMEN.**

As a sign of your commitment, I invite you to exchange with one person next  
to you, a blessing or a sign of Christ's peace.



## BLESSING

As we take leave of this sacred space, let us bless each other with the words of St. Francis. *(Please repeat the words spoken):*

May God bless us and keep us.

May God's face shine upon us and be gracious to us.

May God look upon us with kindness and give us peace.

Que Dios nos bendiga y nos guarde;

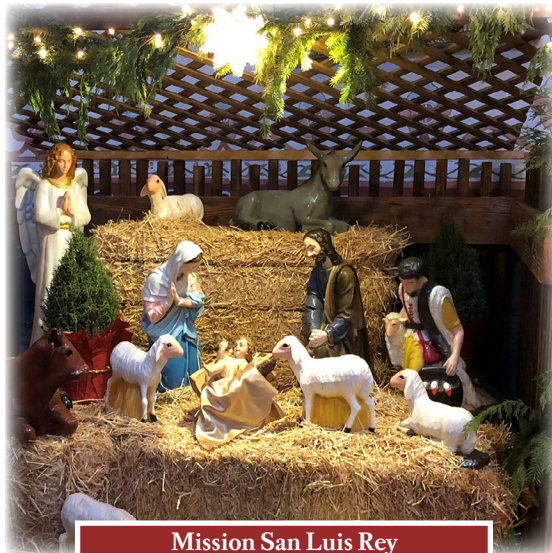
Que Dios haga resplandecer su rostro sobre nosotros, y tenga de misericordia de nosotros;

Que Dios nos mire con bondad y nos de su paz.

Please remain in your pews through the closing hymn. Then process out following the Leaders of Prayer.

**CLOSING HYMN: LOVE IS THE REASON, VS 4 (pg 4)**

**RECESSIONAL: JOY TO THE WORLD!**



Mission San Luis Rey  
Historic Church



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Opening Prayer adapted from Carolyn Townes, OFS

“Love is the Reason” by Cathy Tisel Nelson

From the album Hearts on Fire, the album can be purchased from: <http://www.cathynelsonmusic.com/>

Readings taken from Francis, The Journey and the Dream, “Christmas at Greccio” Chapter by Murray Bodo, OFM

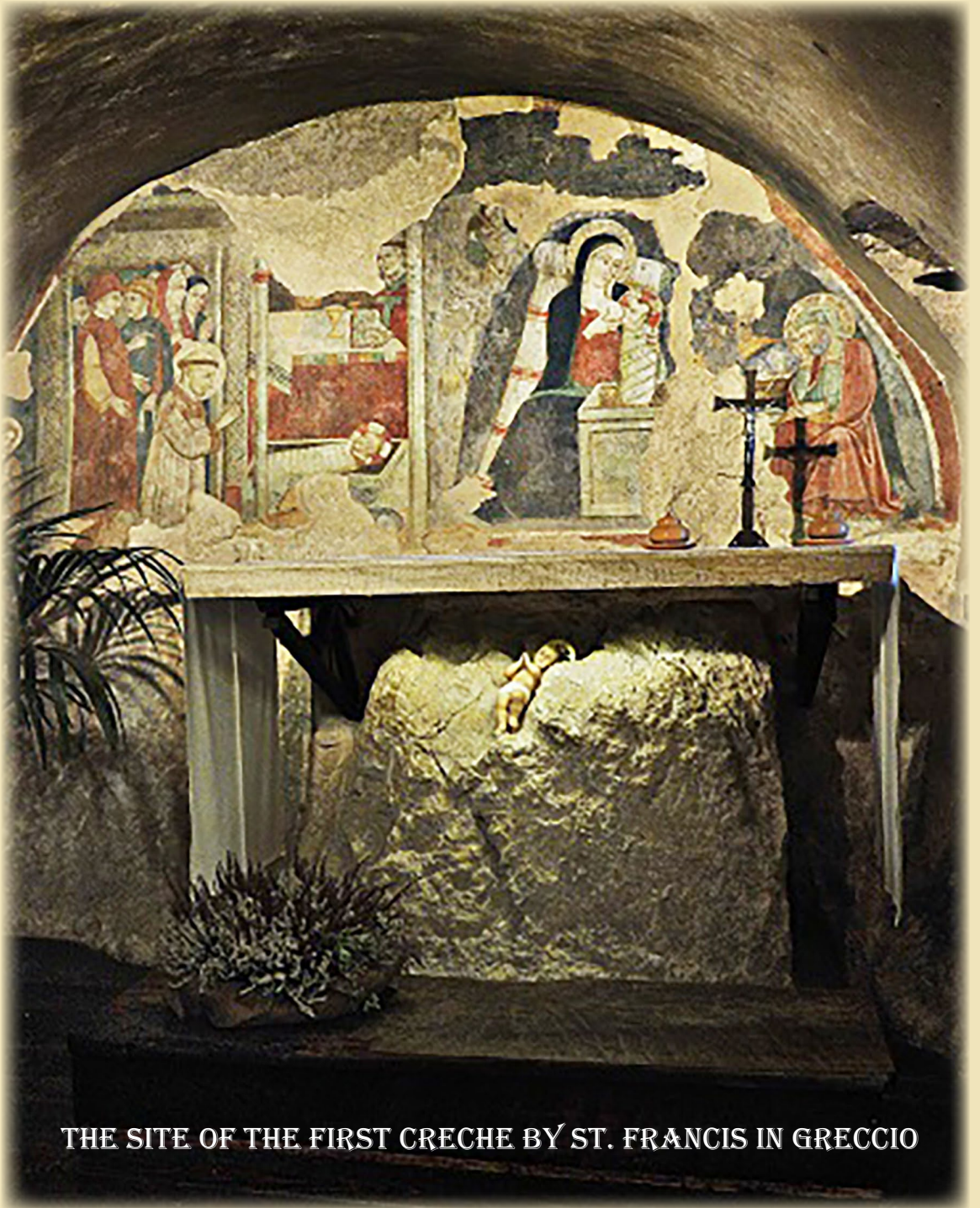
Franciscan Media at: [https://shop.franciscanmedia.org/products/francis-the-journey-and-the-dream?\\_pos=1&\\_sid=5a344e249&\\_ss=r](https://shop.franciscanmedia.org/products/francis-the-journey-and-the-dream?_pos=1&_sid=5a344e249&_ss=r)

## SPECIAL THANKS TO:

- Immaculate Conception Parish and Mission San Luis Rey for hosting our Greccio Prayer Event
- All the music directors, instrumentalist and choirs
- Fr. Michael Blastic, OFM, homilist
- Readers
- The environment committee
- Those who prepared the Worship Aid, Prayer Card
- Those who provided the social with food and beverages
- Members of the Planning Committee: Secular Franciscans, Friars, Sisters



**The Nativity of Christ,**  
written through the hand of  
Kara Gillette, 2022.



THE SITE OF THE FIRST CRECHE BY ST. FRANCIS IN GRECCIO