

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

**979** The use of the Christmas tree is relatively modern. Its origins are found in the medieval mystery plays which depicted the tree of paradise and the Christmas light or candle which symbolized Christ, the Light of the world.

**980** According to custom, the Christmas tree is set up just before Christmas and may remain in place until the solemnity of Epiphany. Although the primary place for the Christmas tree is the home, at times one or more may also be placed in the church. In such a case, the decoration of the trees should be appropriate to their use in the church, and care should be taken that they do not interfere with the requirements of the liturgical space.

**981** The Christmas tree may be blessed on or before Christmas during a celebration of the word of God, or during Morning or Evening Prayer. If the blessing is celebrated during Morning or Evening Prayer, it takes place after the gospel canticle. The intercessions, Lord's Prayer, and prayer of blessing replace the intercessions and concluding prayer of Morning or Evening Prayer.

**982** The lights of the tree are illuminated after the prayer of blessing.

**983** In the home the Christmas tree may be blessed by a parent or another family member, in connection with the evening meal on the Vigil of Christmas or at another suitable time on Christmas Day; the shorter rite may be used for this purpose.

**984** These orders may be used by a priest or a deacon, and also by a layperson, who follows the rites and prayers designated for a lay minister.

## I. ORDER OF BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS TREE

## INTRODUCTORY RITES

**985** When the community has gathered, a suitable song may be sung. After the singing, the minister says:

C.       **In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**  
All:      **Amen.**

**987** A lay minister greets those present in the following words:

**Let us glorify Christ our light, who brings salvation and peace  
into our midst, now and for ever.**

**988** In the following or similar words, the minister prepares those present for the blessing.

My brothers and sisters, amidst signs and wonders Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea: his birth brings joy to our hearts and enlightenment to our minds. With this tree, decorated and adorned, may we welcome Christ among us; may its lights guide us to the perfect light.

## READING OF THE WORD OF GOD

**989** A reader, another person present, or the minister reads a text of sacred Scripture.

Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the apostle Paul to Titus: 3:4-7

But when the kindness and generous love of God our Saviour appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

**990** Or: Genesis 2:4-9 --The tree of life in the centre of the garden.  
Isaiah 9:1-6 --A son is given to us  
Ezekiel 17:22-24 --I will plant a tender shoot on the mountain heights of Israel.

**991** As circumstances suggest, the following responsorial psalm may be sung, or some other suitable song.

Psalm 96

**Response: Christ comes to enlighten us.**

O sing a new song to the Lord,  
sing to the Lord all the earth.  
O sing to the Lord, bless his name.

Proclaim his help day by day  
tell among the nations his glory  
and his wonders among all the peoples.

The Lord is great and worthy of praise,  
to be feared above all gods;  
the gods of the heathens are naught.

It was the Lord who made the heavens,  
his are majesty and state and power  
and splendor in his holy place.

Give the Lord, you families of peoples,  
give the Lord the glory and power;  
give the Lord the glory of his name.

Bring an offering and enter his courts,  
worship the Lord in his temple.  
O earth, tremble before him.

Proclaim to the nations: "God is king."  
The world he made firm in its place;  
he will judge the people in fairness.

Let the heavens rejoice and earth be glad,  
let the sea and all within it thunder praise,  
let the land and all it bears rejoice,  
all the trees of the wood shout for joy  
at the presence of the Lord for he comes,  
he comes to rule the earth.

With justice he will rule the world,  
he will judge the peoples with his truth.

**992** As circumstances suggest, the minister may give those present a brief explanation of the biblical text, so that they may understand through faith the meaning of the celebration.

### **INTERCESSIONS**

**993** The intercessions are then said. The minister introduces them and an assisting minister or one of those present announces the intentions. From the following those best suited to the occasion may be used or adapted, or other intentions that apply to the particular circumstances may be composed.

The minister says:

**C:** Let us ask God to send his blessing upon us and upon this sign of our faith in the Lord.

**Lord, give light to our hearts.**

**R:** That the Church may always reflect the joy of Jesus Christ who enlightens our hearts, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, give light to our hearts.**

That this tree of lights may remind us of the tree of glory on which Christ accomplished our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, give light to our hearts.**

That the joy of Christmas may always be in our homes, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, give light to our hearts.**

That the peace of Christ may dwell in our hearts and in the world, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, give light to our hearts.**

**994** After the intercessions the minister, in the following or similar words, invites all present to sing or say the Lord's Prayer.

**With confident faith let us pray as Christ taught us: Our Father ...**

### **PRAYERS OF BLESSING**

**995** A minister who is a priest or deacon says the prayer of blessing with hands outstretched; a lay minister says the prayer with hands joined.

Lord our God,

**we praise you for the light of creation:**

**the sun, the moon, and the stars of the night.**

**We praise you for the light of Israel:**

**the Law, the prophets, and the wisdom of the Scriptures.**

**We praise you for Jesus Christ, your Son:**

**he is Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace,**

**who fills us with the wonder of your love.**

**Lord God,**

**let your blessing come upon us as we illumine this tree.**

**May the light and cheer it gives be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts.**

**May all who delight in this tree come to the knowledge and joy of salvation.**

**We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

996 Or:

**Holy Lord,  
we come with joy to celebrate the birth of your Son,  
who rescued us from the darkness of sin  
by making the cross a tree of life and light.  
May this tree, arrayed in splendour,  
remind us of the life-giving cross of Christ,  
that we may always rejoice in the new life that shines in our hearts.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The candles or lights of the tree are then illuminated.

997 During the illumination of the tree, the cantor or another minister leads the congregation in singing the following acclamations to Christ, or some other suitable hymn, such as "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

Lord Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary.  
**We welcome you, O Lord.**  
Lord Jesus, hope of the shepherds and the poor.  
**We welcome you, O Lord.**

Lord Jesus, glory of the angels.  
**We welcome you, O Lord.**

#### **CONCLUDING RITE**

999 A lay minister concludes the rite by signing himself or herself with the sign of the cross and saying:

**May the God of glory fill our hearts with peace and joy, now and for ever.  
Amen.**

1000 It is preferable to end the celebration with a suitable song.

## II. BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS TREE - SHORTER RITE

**1001** All make the sign of the cross as the minister says:

Blessed be the name of the Lord.

All reply: Now and for ever.

**1002** One of those present or the minister reads a text of sacred Scripture, for example:

Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the apostle Paul to Titus: 3:4-7

But when the kindness and generous love of God our saviour appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our saviour, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

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who fills us with the wonder of your love.**

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