

Christmas 2009

Immanuel – stations at Bethlehem

You, who created the world
you became incarnate moved by love

You, the creator of everything
is conceived in the womb of a woman

You, whom the universe cannot grasp
became incarnate – as small as a spark

You, the One who formed creation and the
beings in it
you let yourself be formed in the womb
of a woman

You, Most High, Lord of the Universe,
you want to appear simply as a
carpenter's son.

You, Master of all Masters and King of the
World
you become the child of simple folk in
an occupied country

You, who owns everything after all
you only find closed doors in the alleys
of Bethlehem

You, who loves all of mankind
you are born in a secluded cave

You, who stands above the history of the
world
you are lying on a bed of straw and you
are admired by shepherds

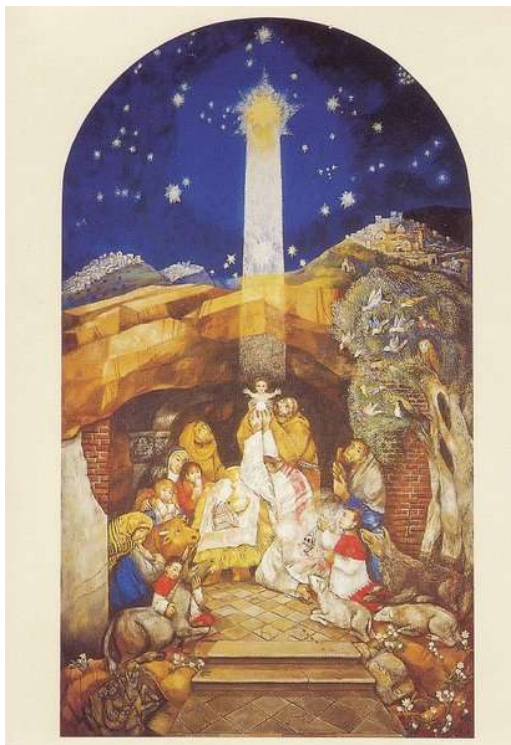
You, the only one to satisfy our hunger for
life
you are now thirsty yourself and suck at
your mother's breast

You, who is wisdom and who knows all
works
you cry and babble like a baby

You, who leads the world to perfection
has to learn to walk on Miriam's hand

You, whose love courts us in creation and
history
will show us as a Brother how God's
future will begin

Fr. Niklaus Kuster ofmcap



“...For the most holy Child has been given to us; He was born for us at the wayside and was laid in a manger because there was no room for Him at the inn.”

The Vespers of the Nativity

With our sincerest thanks for your loyal cooperation we extend our best wishes for a gracious Christmas and a blessed New Year. May the infinite and humble God find a place in our hearts so that we may convey his loving closeness to the world.

Cordial greetings from the CCFMC-Team

Patricia Hoffmann, Hedwig Maurer, Andreas Müller OFM and Wolfgang Schömig

Bare-Footed in the Foot-Prints of Jesus –
The Christ-Experience of Francis and how he followed Him
Br. Niklaus Kuster OFM Cap



8. Incarnation

Amazement at the "Earthliness of God"

At the latest in 1220 the foot-prints of Jesus also lead the wandering Brother to Bethlehem – with heart and soul. His fight against the crusade fails in the encampment of the Christian alliance; on the other hand he wins the friendship of Sultan Malik al Kamil on the other side of the Nile. The Sultan allows the Poverello to freely move to Palestine. Back in Europe the Brother looks for ways at Christmas time to also persuade the Italian peasants to come to the shepherd fields of Bethlehem: with their hearts and senses. The Christmas at Greccio was to go down in history. Francis had staged the nativity of Jesus so vividly thus creating the tradition of the nativity celebration. He had spent the cold Advent season of 1223 with some of the companions in the hermitage of Greccio: it consisted of rocky caves above the valley of Rieti, with a great view onto a lovely plain and onto the Sabine Mountains north of Rome.

Quiet times following weeks on the road help to reflect and to deepen experiences. At the same time they give space for drawing water from deep sources and for the solitude with God. Just as his Rabbi, Francis wants to go to God when he comes from the people and to come from God when he goes to the people. (see Mark 1, 21-39). The biographer begins the report on the memorable Christmas celebration with the comment that the Saint had *"consistently meditated the words of the Master and had never lost track of his doings. Especially his humility in the incarnation and his love even unto death had been deeply imprinted in his memory."* Amazement at God's path on earth prompts the Poverello two weeks before Christmas to prepare a special celebration together with a close friend, a person of noble rank from the region. It is to remind the Brothers and the people of the love and humility of God in a sensuous way. In fact the people, who gather with torches in the Holy Night, find a newborn child in diapers, lying on a straw bed between an ox and a donkey. During the Eucharistic Mass at the animated Christmas manger Francis recites the Gospel, and the cave, the hay, the animals, the tiny child, and the people crowded in the cave give a unique colourful touch to it. At that time, so the story of the moving celebration closes, *"the child Jesus has been newly born in many hearts"* (1 C 84-87).

