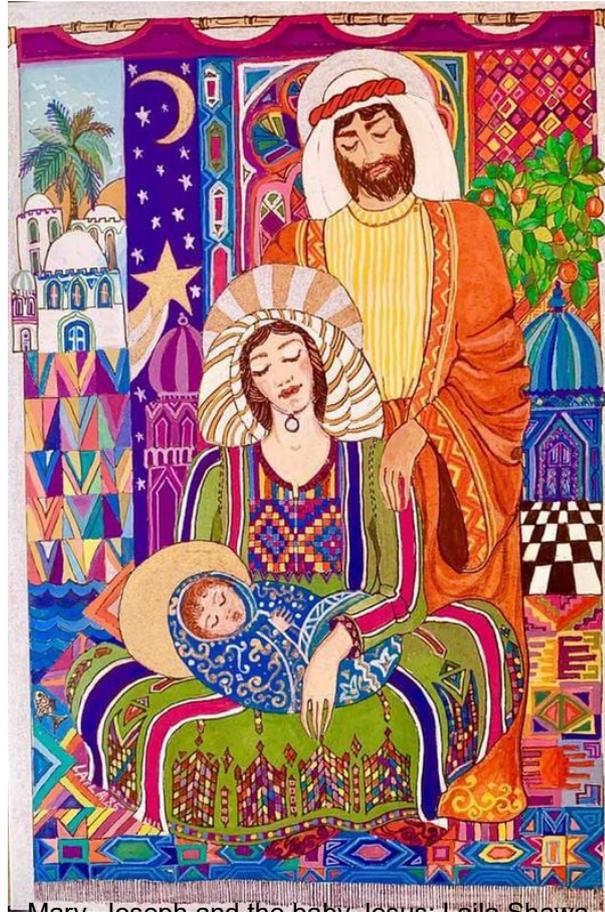


## Night Prayer for Little Gidding for Christmas Day

This was meant to be a filmed night prayer for the end of Christmas Day. Driving back from Ely, I heard, for the first time, John Rutter's new carol in honour of the scientists who produced the Oxford vaccine and brought hope. I was in tears (not a good place to be driving through St Ives). The theme of the carol – Joseph's story – took me to that first Christmas Day in the evening, with Joseph looking back at all that had happened, and at the tiny baby sleeping. Is it possible that he, this vulnerable newborn, is really the Saviour of the world, the hope that the world has been waiting for.

So many of you who will be following this are having a very different Christmas than the one even envisaged a week ago. I know that many have made the decision to spend it alone, and others had that decision made for



Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus: Laila Shawa

them with the restrictions imposed on 20<sup>th</sup> December. I am sure that, as you look back on the day, there are many mixed emotions – thoughts of what could have been; empty places for this year; maybe empty chairs that will never be filled again; on top of that may well be a sense of having done Christmas differently, and, in some strange way, finding it deeply meaningful. This carol was produced to give thanks for the hope the new vaccine brings, but speaks of a deeper miracle – the hope that a tiny baby born 2000 years ago brings. It ends, appropriately quietly, with the words 'The angels sing'. The carol is so new – it was premiered on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December – that there isn't a recording of it at the point of producing the service. All I can find is the Youtube video of the concert. And so, the filmed service became a written one, with musical links instead.

Apologies if you don't like John Rutter's music, as this is probably just a little full of his music. Find something else to listen to that you like.

*You don't need to join Youtube to follow the links. As long as you don't mind the ads –and the owners of the music receive the money from these- youtube is free. You simply need to click on the links.*

*The artwork is all from a Facebook site called 'The Art of Occupied Palestine'*

**Listen to : The Candlelight Carol (John Rutter).**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbudPRPrFWI>

How do you capture the wind on the water?  
How do you count all the stars in the sky?  
How do you measure the love of a mother  
Or how can you write down a baby's first cry?

Candlelight, angel light, firelight and star-glow  
Shine on his cradle till breaking of dawn  
Gloria, Gloria, in excelsis Deo  
Angels are singing; the Christ child is born.

Shepherds and wise men will kneel and adore him  
Seraphim round him their vigil will keep,  
Nations proclaim him their Lord and their Saviour  
But Mary will hold him and sing him to sleep.

Find him at Bethlehem laid in a manger  
Christ our Redeemer asleep in the hay  
Godhead incarnate and hope of salvation  
A child with his mother that first Christmas Day

THE PREPARATION

The Lord almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end.

**Amen**

Our help is in the name of the Lord  
**who made heaven and earth.**

*We spend a period of silence for reflection on the day that has just past.*

**Holy God,  
holy and strong,  
holy and immortal:  
have mercy on us.**

O God, make speed to save us.  
**O Lord, make haste to help us.**

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now,  
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

**Listen to :Of the father's love begotten**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mkUAk94ThI>

Of the Father's love begotten,  
ere the worlds began to be,  
he is Alpha and Omega,  
he the source, the ending he,  
of the things that are, that have been,  
and that future years shall see,  
evermore and evermore.

This is he whom seers and sages  
sang of old with one accord;  
whom the writings of the prophets  
promised in their faithful word;  
now he shines, the long-expected:  
let creation praise its Lord,  
evermore and evermore.

O that birth for ever blessed  
when the Virgin, full of grace,  
by the Holy Ghost conceiving,  
bare the Saviour of our race,  
and the Babe, the world's Redeemer,  
first revealed his sacred face,  
evermore and evermore.

Now let old and young men's voices  
join with boys' thy name to sing,  
matrons, virgins, little maidens  
in glad chorus answering;  
let their guileless songs re-echo,  
and the heart its praises bring,  
evermore and evermore.

O ye heights of heaven, adore him;  
angel-hosts, his praises sing;  
powers, dominions, bow before him,  
and extol our God and King:  
let no tongue on earth be silent,  
every voice in concert ring,  
evermore and evermore.

Christ, to thee, with God the Father,  
and, O Holy Ghost, to thee,  
hymn and chant and high thanksgiving  
and unwearied praises be,  
honour, glory, and dominion,  
and eternal victory,  
evermore and evermore.



RAWAN ANANI THE HOLY FAMILY

## THE WORD OF GOD

### Psalm 31: 1-5

In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge;  
let me never be put to shame;  
deliver me in your righteousness.

Incline your ear to me;  
make haste to deliver me.

Be my strong rock, a fortress to save me,  
for you are my rock and my stronghold;  
guide me, and lead me for your name's sake.

Take me out of the net  
that they have laid secretly for me,  
for you are my strength.

Into your hands I commend my spirit,  
for you have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now,  
and shall be for ever. Amen**



MAHER NAJI

JOHN 1: 4-5, 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

TO THINK ABOUT

**Listen to Joseph's carol**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GM8fn4sSho0>

At the time of writing, the carol on its own is not available on Youtube. It is part of a whole concert. At the bottom of the video is a 'slider' which tells you how far into the video you are. The carol begins at 23: 23(23 minutes and 21 seconds) and ends at 27:54.

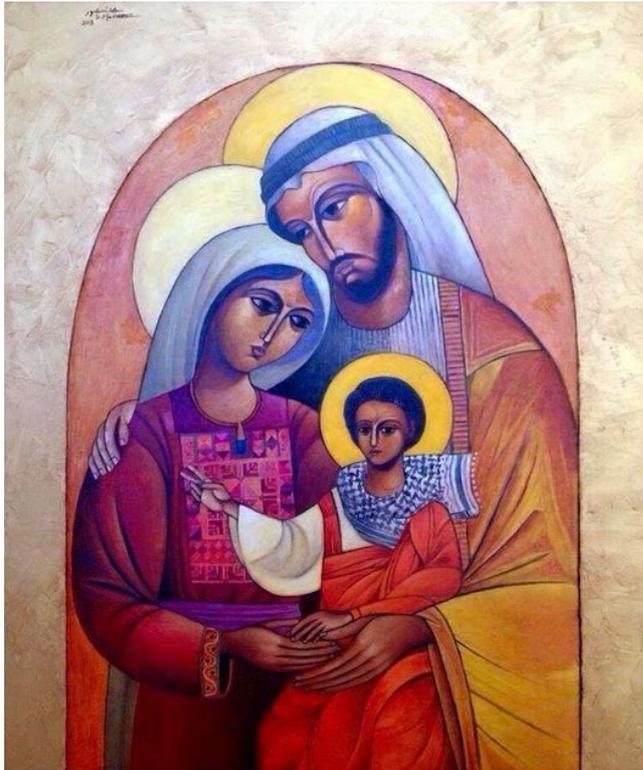
Long and weary was the journey  
Hard and dark the road we trod  
Deep enfolded in the stillness of the night  
It seemed I heard the voice of God.  
'Fear not, Joseph. Weep not, Mary,  
travel onward through the darkness of night;  
Bethlehem will see his glory:  
Christ, Emmanuel, the Lord of light'

Ecce miraculum, ecce miraculum  
Here in a stable lies your heav'nly King.  
Ecce miraculum, ecce miraculum,  
Alleluia, alleluia hear the angels sing.

Journey's end was just as stable bare,  
Cold and lonely for a birth;  
Ox and ass were our companions there  
When God revealed himself on earth  
Shepherd came in awe and wonder,  
Kneeling low beside his manger stall,  
Angels singing, Wise men bringing  
Gifts to lay before the Lord of all.

Ecce miraculum, ecce miraculum,  
Here in a stable lies your heav'nly King.  
Ecce miraculum, ecce miraculum,  
Alleluia, alleluia, hear the angels sing.

This beautiful carol is dedicated to the Oxford COVID Vaccine Trail Group and RECOVERY Team.



SLIMAN MANSOUR

JOSEPH (Lisa Debney from 'Hay and Stardust')

Here I stand,  
holding the tiny, warm weight  
of God in my hands.  
Such a tiny weight  
of the world.  
Here I stand,  
the proud father? – not me.  
I have been utterly humbled  
by your arrival.  
You're not my offspring,  
not part of me,  
and yet, at the same time,  
already inextricably part of my life.  
I was your hasty midwife,  
who delivered you with  
unskilled trembling hands.  
Who pulled you from your haven  
into this.  
The place which is more accustomed  
to witnessing  
the first uncertain breaths of  
calves and lambs  
than the first uncertain  
breaths of a Messiah.  
Here I stand with  
your weight both

small and immense  
resting on me.  
So maybe I am proud,  
proud of the privilege,  
proud of being your father  
just for the present.  
And I pray, little Lord,  
that just as I delivered you,  
you will in return one day  
deliver me.

SOMETIMES I CRY (KATHY GALLOWAY IN 'HAY AND STARDUST')

Sometimes I cry when I think of the child  
born in a stable, no room anywhere,  
growing to live in a world cold with grief and shame,  
dying in agony, nailed there by fear.

Sometimes I pray when I think of the child,  
born to be human in weakness and care,  
growing to stand with the poor and the prisoner,  
dying to raise them in freedom to share.

Sometimes I laugh when I think of the child,  
born without name on the edge of the town,  
growing in powerlessness, changer of images,  
dying derided and mocked as a clown.

Sometimes I tremble when I think of the child,  
born out of mystery, starlight and sign,  
maker of miracles out of reality,  
raising them up till the end of all time.

But sometimes I sing when I think of the child,  
born out of joy and obedience and pain,  
growing to touch human living with ecstasy,  
dying to show us that love lives again.



Scar of Bethlehem Banksy

THE RESPONSORY

Into your hands, O Lord,  
I commend my spirit .Alleluia, alleluia  
**Into your hands, O Lord,  
I commend my spirit Alleluia, alleluia**

For you have redeemed me, Lord God of truth  
**I commend my spirit.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
**Into your hands, O Lord,  
I commend my spirit. Alleluia, alleluia**

Keep me as the apple of your eye.  
**Hide me under the shadow of your wings.The**

NUNC DIMITTIS

**Alleluia. The Word was made flesh, alleluia,  
and dwelt among us. Alleluia, alleluia.**

Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace:  
your word has been fulfilled.

My own eyes have seen the salvation  
which you have prepared in the sight of every people:

A light to reveal you to the nations  
and the glory of your people, Israel

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now,  
and shall be for ever. Amen**

**Alleluia. The Word was made flesh, alleluia,  
and dwelt among us. Alleluia, alleluia.**

PRAYERS

When the world was dark  
and the city was quiet,  
you came.

You crept in beside us.

And no-one knew.  
Only the few  
who dared to believe  
that God might do something different.

Will you do the same this Christmas, Lord?

Will you come into the darkness of tonight's world;  
not the friendly darkness  
as when sleep rescues us from tiredness,  
but the fearful darkness,  
in which people have stopped believing  
that COVID 19 will be controlled  
or that we will see our families and friends once more  
or that war will end  
or that food will come  
or that a government will change  
or that the Church cares?

Will you come into that darkness  
and do something different  
to save your people from death and despair?

Will you come into the quietness of our cities and towns and villages,  
not the friendly quietness  
as when lovers hold hands,  
but the fearful silence  
when the phone has not rung,  
the letter has not come,  
the friendly voice no longer speaks,  
the doctor's face says it all?

Will you come into that darkness.  
and do something different,  
not to distract, but to embrace your people?

And will you come into the dark corners  
and the quiet places of our lives?

We ask this not because we are guilt-ridden  
or want to be,  
but because the fullness our lives long for  
depends on us being as open and vulnerable to you  
as you were to us,  
when you came,  
wearing no more than nappies,

and trusting human hands  
to hold their maker.

Will you come into our lives,  
if we open them to you  
and do something different?

When the world was dark  
and the city was quiet  
you came,

You crept in beside us.

Do the same this Christmas, Lord,  
Do the same this Christmas.

**Amen**

COLLECT

We give you thanks, O God,  
for the gift to the world of our Redeemer;  
as we sing your glory at the close of this day,  
so may we know his presence in our hearts,  
who is our Saviour and our Lord,  
now and for ever. **Amen**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

As we come to the ending of the day,  
as our Saviour taught us, so we pray  
**Our Father in heaven,**  
**hallowed be your name**  
**your kingdom come,**  
**your will be done,**  
**on earth as in heaven.**  
**Give us today our daily bread.**  
**Forgive us our sins**  
**as we forgive those who sin against us.**  
**Lead us not into temptation**  
**but deliver us from evil.**  
**For the Kingdom the power and the glory are yours**  
**now and for ever**  
Amen.

THE CONCLUSION

In peace, we will lie down and sleep;  
**for you alone, Lord, make us dwell in safety.**

Abide with us, Lord Jesus,  
**for the night is at hand and the day is now past.**

As the night-watch looks for the morning,  
**so do we look for you, O Christ.**

**May the love of the Word made flesh enfold us,  
his joy fill our lives,  
his peace be in our hearts;  
and the blessing of God be with us  
this night and always. Amen**

**Listen to : Still, still, still** either John Rutter or Libera  
Still, still, still,  
The night is calm and still.  
The Christ-child in his crib lies sleeping  
Angels round watch are keeping.  
Still, still, still,  
The night is calm and still.

Sleep, sleep, sleep,  
Sweet Jesus softly sleep.  
While Mary sings and gently holds you  
Safely in her arms enfolds you.  
Sleep, sleep, sleep,  
Sweet Jesus softly sleep.

Joy, joy, joy,  
Glad tidings of great Joy,  
For through God's holy Incarnation  
Christ is born for our salvation.  
Joy, joy, joy  
Glad tidings of great Joy.