

THE CELEBRATION OF HOLY CHRISTMAS



A Children's Christmas Program

By the Reverend Friedrich Lochner (1869)
Translated by the Reverend John W. Fenton



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OF
HOLY CHRISTMAS**

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Translated by the Reverend John W. Fenton, M.Div., S.T.M.

The Celebration of Holy Christmas

A Children's Christmas Program

This Christmas program is a translation and revision of *Liturgie für einen Kinder-Gottesdienst zur Feier der heiligen Weihnacht*, a German children's Christmas program.

The Reverend Friedrich Lochner (1822-1902) originally wrote this program in 1869 for his congregation, Trinity Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. For several decades it was the only children's program used at Trinity Church. As late as 1949 it was hailed as "unsurpassed...in spite of the many other [children's programs] that have appeared since then."

The program's central thought can be summarized in this way. The Christian celebrates Christmas in joyful thanksgiving for the birth of Jesus Christ. God the Father promised this birth in the beginning and repeated His promise down through the ages. It was not the birth of any ordinary man, but God Himself being born a man of the Virgin Mary. This birth of the Son of God is for our good because, through the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, God offers to all mankind freedom from the guilt of sin and the fear of death.

Throughout the program the children encourage the congregation to take to heart and take comfort in our Lord's birth as the Savior of the nations. In this way this children's program is a suitable preparation for the full Christian Christmas celebration; namely, the Service of our Lord where the benefits of His birth are unmistakably distributed in the Word and Supper of our Christ.

May our Lord Jesus in His Word here presented deepen our understanding, increase our appreciation, and encourage our faithful thanksgiving for His holy and perfect birth.

Translated and Revised by the Reverend John W. Fenton

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PROCESSIONAL SONG

“Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful”

- All** Oh, come, all ye faithful, triumphantly sing;
Come, see in the manger our Savior and King!
To Bethlehem hasten with joyful accord;
- Children** Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.
- All** True Son of the Father, He comes from the skies;
To be born of a virgin He doth not despise.
To Bethlehem hasten with joyful accord;
- Children** Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.
- All** Hark, hark, to the angels all singing in heaven,
“To God in the highest all glory be given!”
To Bethlehem hasten with joyful accord;
- Children** Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.
- All** To Thee, then, O Jesus, this day of Thy birth,
Be glory and honor through heaven and earth,
True Godhead incarnate, omnipotent Word!
- Children** Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

OPENING VERSICLES

- P:** O Lord, open Thou my lips.
C: **And my mouth shall show forth Thy praise.**
- P:** O God, we praise Thee in the stillness of Zion.
C: **And unto Thee do we pay our vows.**
- P:** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.
C: **As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Hallelujah!**
- P:** Unto us a Child is born. Hallelujah!
C: **Unto us a Son is given. Hallelujah!**
- P:** The Lord be with you.
C: **And with thy spirit.**
- P:** Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, we give Thee thanks for Thy great grace and mercy that, in Thine only-begotten Son, Thou hast come in our flesh and through Him hast redeemed us from sins and eternal death; and we beseech Thee, illumine our hearts through Thy Holy Spirit that we may be thankful to Thee for this Thy grace and, in all need and anxiety, may be comforted by the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
C: **Amen.**
- P:** Beloved in Christ! When our Savior said, “Out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise”, He wanted to show that, by His grace and mercy, He could produce praise and thanksgiving even in the littlest ones. And when our Lord entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He was so pleased when little children greeted Him in the temple singing, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” Therefore, in this time of Christmas joy, it is fitting that our little children also come into His house to speak and sing of God’s sweet and wonderful deeds. So let us joyfully listen to them, mingle our praise with theirs, and pray God that we become as little children; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

CONGREGATIONAL SONG
“Oh, Come, All Ye Children”

Oh, come, all ye children, oh, come, one and all,
To Bethlehem haste, to the manger so small,
God's Son for a gift has been sent you this night
To be your Redeemer, your Joy and Delight.

He's born in a stable for you and for me.
Draw near by the bright gleaming starlight to see,
In swaddling clothes lying, so meek and so mild,
And purer than angels, the heavenly Child.

See Mary and Joseph with love-beaming eyes
Are gazing upon the rude bed where He lies,
The shepherds are kneeling, with hearts full of love,
While angels sing loud hallelujahs above.

Kneel down and adore Him with shepherds today,
Lift up little hands now and praise Him as they;
Rejoice that a Savior from sin you can boast,
And join in the song of the heavenly host.

THE REASON FOR CHRISTMAS

- Pastor** Where does our joyfulness come from on this holy day?
Children The very gracious birth of our dear Lord and Savior
Jesus Christ produces tonight's great joy.
- Pastor** Which article of the Creed tells us about our Lord's
birth?
Children The second article about Redemption where we confess:
“I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was
conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.”
- Pastor** Who is Jesus Christ?
Children He is “true God, begotten of the Father from eternity,
and also true Man, born of the Virgin Mary.” As one
person, He is both completely God and completely Man.
- Pastor** When did He become man, or when was He born?
Children Jesus was born when the time of God's promise was
fulfilled, almost 2000 years ago.

- Pastor** How long was the time of God's promise or the time of
God's prophecy before Christ was born?
Children About 4000 years.

CONGREGATIONAL SONG

“Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising”

Children
Come, your hearts and voices
raising,
Christ the Lord with gladness
praising;
Loudly sing His love amazing,
Worthy folk of Christendom.

Left Side
See how God, for us providing,
Gave His Son and life abiding,
He our weary steps is guiding,
From earth's woe to heav'nly joy.

Right Side
Christ, from heaven to us
descending
And in love our race befriending,
In our need His help extending,
Saved us from the wily Foe.

All
From the bondage that oppressed
us,
From sin's fetters that possessed
us,
From the grief that sore
distressed us,
We, the captives, now are free.

Children
Gracious Child, we pray Thee,
hear us,
From the lowly manger cheer us,
Gently lead us and be near us
Till we join th' angelic choir.

THE PROMISE OF CHRIST'S COMING

- Children** In the beginning, God our Father promised that Jesus
Christ would be born. Right after the fall into sin, God
promised a Savior to our first parents, Adam and Eve.
- Children** God the Lord said to the serpent: “I will put enmity
between you and the woman, and between your seed
and her Seed. He shall bruise your head under foot and
you shall bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:15
- Children** God later repeated that same promise to many other
people. 2000 years later, to Abraham, God said: “In you
all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Genesis 12:3

Children When the patriarch Jacob blessed his sons, the promise was repeated again: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people.”
Genesis 49:10

Children Moses also repeated the promise when he said: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.”
Deuteronomy 18:15

Children God again repeated the promise when He told David: “When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your Seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever.”
2 Samuel 7:12-13

Children The Prophet Isaiah predicted that the Savior would be born of a virgin when he said: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”
Isaiah 7:14

Children Isaiah also said this about the coming of Jesus: “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulders. And His Name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”
Isaiah 9:6

Children Finally Malachi, the last of the prophets, spoke about the coming of Christ in the flesh: “Behold, I send My messenger, and He will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, says the Lord of hosts.”
Malachi 3:1

CHILDREN'S SONG

“Behold, A Branch is Growing”

CHRIST IS BORN

Young Child Where was the baby Jesus to be born?

Older Child In Bethlehem, in the land of Judah. For so it is written by the Prophet Micah: “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be ruler in Israel.”
Micah 5:2

Young Child Was Jesus born rich and famous?

Older Child No. Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, was born in great poverty and humbleness.

Young Child Where does it say this?

Older Child The Holy Evangelist, St Luke, writes this: “And it came to pass in those days, that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”
Luke 2

CONGREGATIONAL SONG

“Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord”

Let the earth now praise the Lord, What the fathers most desired
Who hath truly kept His word What the prophets' heart inspired,
And the sinners' Help and Friend What they longed for many a year,
Now at last to us doth send. Stands fulfilled in glory here.

CHRIST'S BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

- Young Child** How did other people know that Jesus was born?
Older Child St. Luke writes this: "Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."
Luke 2:8-11
- Young Child** How did the shepherds know that the baby was Jesus?
Older Child The angel said, "And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."
Luke 2:12
- Young Child** What happened next?
Older Child "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!"
Luke 2:13-14
- Young Child** What did the shepherds do after they had seen and heard the angels?
Older Child "So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another: Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us. And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger."
Luke 2:12
- Young Child** Did the shepherds tell anyone else this news?
Older Child Yes. "Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart."
Luke 2:17-19

- Little Child** And what did the shepherds do then?
Older Child "Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them."
Luke 2:20

CHILDREN AND CONGREGATIONAL SONG

"A Great and Mighty Wonder"

- A great and mighty wonder,
A full and holy cure:
The Virgin bears the infant
With virgin honor pure!
Repeat the hymn again:
- Children**
To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!
- The Word becomes incarnate
And yet remains on high,
And cherubims sing anthems
To shepherds from the sky.
Repeat the hymn again:
- Children**
To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!
- Since all He comes to ransom,
By all be He adored,
The Infant born in Bethl'em,
The Savior and the Lord.
Repeat the hymn again:
- Children**
To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!

THE REASON CHRIST WAS BORN

- People** Why did the Son of God become Man?
Child So that He would have flesh and blood like us, and take on our sin. And so that all creation would not be ruined.
- People** Why was He born so poor and miserable?
Child He came to earth poor so that He might have mercy on us and make us rich in heaven and to be like the dear angels.
- People** So what has moved the Son of God to become man?
Child His mercy for us miserable men, as we have already said. For we were driven out of heaven and became partners with the devil because of our sin. So Jesus Christ came once again to deliver and help us. That is why we so often sing these words: "O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, who takest away the sin of the world."
John 1:29

People For whose good is Christ born?
Child Christ is born for all poor sinners who receive and confess Him as their Savior. For the angels said that the great peace is good for all people.

People How can we become partakers of this Savior and His complete deliverance?
Child This is how: do not doubt but firmly believe that He became man even for your sake and for your good. For Christ Himself says: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

People Meanwhile, what shall we do until He finally carries us from this vale of tears?
Child We shall delight and take comfort in Him and His grace, bless Him, serve Him, and continually call on Him so that He will eternally preserve us in good conscience in His kingdom.

People Where does the Bible say that?
Child In his letter to Titus, St. Paul write this: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." Titus 2:11-14

PASTORAL HOMILY

CLOSING VERSICLES

P: The Word was made flesh. Hallelujah.
C: **And dwelt among us. Alleluia!**

P: And we beheld His glory. Hallelujah.
C: **The glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father full of grace and truth. Alleluia!**

P: The Lord be with you.
C: **And with thy spirit.**

P: Let us pray. O God, who hast made this most holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light; grant, we beseech Thee, that, as we have known on earth the mysteries of that Light, we may also come to the fullness of it's joys in heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.
C: **Amen**

P: The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace.
C: **Amen**

CLOSING CONGREGATIONAL SONG

"Let Us All with Gladsome Voice"

Let us all with gladsome voice
Praise the God of heaven
Who, to bid our hearts rejoice,
His own Son hath given.

To this vale of tears He comes,
Here to serve in sadness,
That with Him in heav'n's fair home
We may reign in gladness.

We are rich, for He was poor;
Is not this a wonder?
Therefore praise God evermore
Here on earth and yonder.

O Lord Christ, our Savior dear,
Be Thou ever near us.
Grant us now a glad new year.
Amen, Jesus, hear us!