

- 1 We're going to listen to an account of how St Francis of Assisi created the first **Christmas Crib** .
- 2 For many people, one of the most beautiful and peaceful towns in the world is that of Assisi, set on a hillside in northern Italy.
- 3 There it was in the year 1223 that St Francis thought how best he might portray the simplicity of the Birth of the Son of God into our world.
- 4 In the darkness of Christmas Eve and in the days before electricity, people brought candles and burning torches which lit up the hillside as they travelled from around: all converging on a cave on the hillside.
- 5 As the people arrived, hay was spread out, and local farmers and shepherds led into the cave an ox and a donkey and a few sheep. The animals were at peace; the people were hopeful.
- 6 Then Francis himself placed on a stone altar cloths that were wrapped to resemble a baby. All the people prayed and sang. The Christmas Midnight Mass began. Francis himself read the Gospel, telling how Mary and Joseph had travelled and found no room available in Bethlehem, whose name means "*the House of Bread*".
- 7 There they sheltered with animals, and Mary gave birth to Jesus in poverty and simplicity, placing into a manger (from which the animals ate hay) the Child who would later declare himself to be "*the Bread of life*".
- 8 As the Mass ended, the people left the cave. They had repeated the words of the angel and had, indeed, given "*Glory to God in the highest!*" They returned to their homes, joyful, and living in peace with one another: "*Peace to all people of good will!*"
- 9 We have heard how Francis of Assisi created the first Christmas Crib, and placed an image of Jesus there, amidst the ordinary surroundings of the lives of the local people.
- 10 *Let us pray:*
**God our Father,
may the simplicity of the birth
of Jesus, your Son,
remind us
that we can readily discover him
in the ordinariness of our daily lives.
Amen.**

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:
www.prayingeachday.org