

1 We'll reflect and pray today using a few sentences from some Christmas carols.

2 'O Little Town of Bethlehem' includes these words:

"The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee" (Bethlehem) "tonight."

3 *Let us pray:*

As we are about to focus on your birth, Lord, we bring our fears to you, remembering that you assured us that "There is no need to be afraid". *Mt 10³¹*

We also bring our hopes to you, knowing that you said to us: "Place your trust in me." *Jn 14¹*

4 Let's pause for a moment to name some "hopes and fears" and place them into God's hands...

(Pause...)

5 'Once in Royal David's City' has these words:

*"He was little, weak and helpless...
"With the poor... and lowly
laid on earth our Saviour holy...
"He feeleth for our sadness
and he shareth in our gladness."*

6 *Let us pray:*

You placed yourself, Lord, with the poor and helpless, and identified fully with them, seeking no advantage for yourself. Inspire us to "feel" for how other people are, that we may try to understand them

and be willing to place ourselves alongside those in need. Amen.

7 The Advent carol, 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel', says:

*"From depths of hell thy people save...
And close the path to misery."*

8 *Let us pray:*

We remember, Lord, those who are experiencing the hell of poverty, drugs, alcoholism, abuse, homelessness, persecution, and the other forms of hell that are to be found in our world today. We bring before you, Lord, those who feel unloved and all who have little joy and little hope in their lives. Amen.

9 Most carols focus on the birth of Jesus. 'While Shepherds Watched'

reminds us of the message of the angel:

*"And on the earth be peace:
goodwill henceforth from heaven to men
begin and never cease",*

yet there is much tension in the Holy Land in our own times, between Jews and Palestinians.

10 We also sing:

*"And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace"*

from the carol 'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen':

11 *Let us pray:*

We think of ordinary people, Lord,
caught up in war
in man-made divisions
between people
of different race or belief,
or background or culture.

We pray for justice and peace
for all who feel threatened.

We pray, too,
for greater love and acceptance
for those experiencing difficulties
in family life.

In praying for these things,
we are praying, too,
that you inspire and enable us
to be instruments
of your justice and peace today.
Amen.



 *If today's words are to be read in public, they need to be read slowly and clearly and not rushed. There should be a short pause between each of the four sections.*

 *For another carol, see 'Silent Night' - 24 December.*

 *Members of a group could gather appropriate pictures from newspapers and magazines to match lines of the carols. If photocopied onto acetates, the pictures can be projected to good effect in black and white via an overhead projector. Slides could be used with some of the passages.*

 *Appropriate verses from each carol could be sung.*

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