



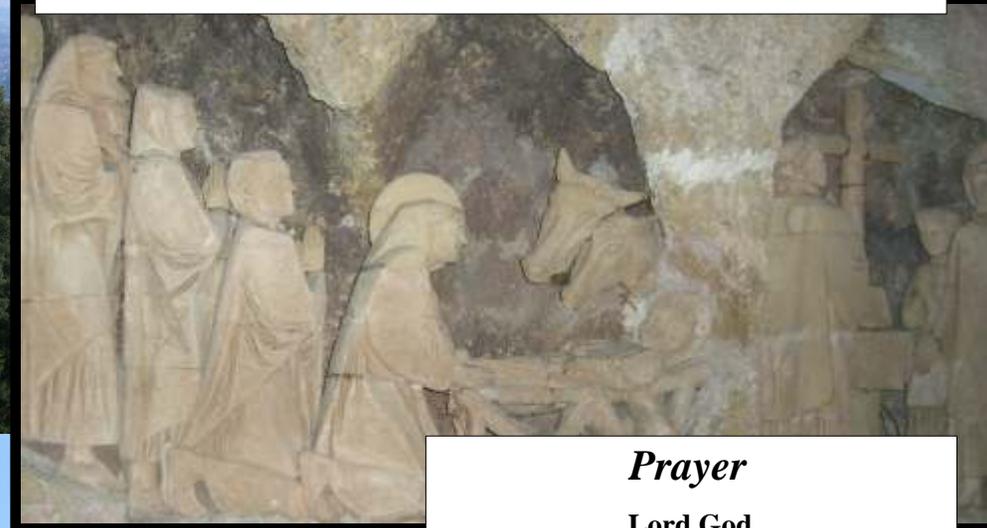
# Pilgrimage Reflection

## Reliving Christmas at Greccio

In this busy holiday season we hear, as we so often do, of the importance to pause and recall that first Christmas. And because this same message is repeated each year, it has become rather easy to ignore, or to put off for another time, whenever we're able to find time! Similar challenges existed in Francis' day. He thought the magnitude of what Christmas is all about wasn't being celebrated properly. So in an effort to rekindle the joy and love of the infant Jesus back into people's hearts, the saint from Assisi employed the help of friends—along with a few barnyard animals—to create a “live nativity” for the people of Greccio.



*Scripture*  
**Luke 2:8-12**  
Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”



*Prayer*  
Lord God,  
as we anticipate the coming of Your Son,  
inspire us with a desire to pause,  
to look upon the nativity scene  
with fresh eyes,  
with a renewed sense of wonder  
at its simplicity.  
Help us embrace, as Francis did  
all those centuries ago,  
the joy of celebrating  
Your boundless love  
incarnated in our Savior's  
humble birth.

### Early Writings

From The First Book of Celano's *The Life of Saint Francis*

**W**e should note then, as matter worthy of memory and something to be recalled with reverence, what he did, three years prior to his death, at the town of Greccio, on the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . *As they could, the men and women of that land with exultant hearts prepare candles and torches to light up that night whose shining star has enlightened every day and year. Finally, the holy man of God comes and, finding all things prepared, he saw them and was glad. Indeed, the manger is prepared, the hay is carried in, and the ox and the ass are led to the spot. There simplicity is given a place of honor, poverty is exalted, humility is commended, and out of Greccio is made a new Bethlehem.*

Regis Armstrong, Wayne Hellmann and William Short, eds., *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Saint*, Vol. I (New York: New City Press, 2000), 254-255.

