

## Inter-Carol Reading

**Leo I**

### **Sermon 1: de Nativitate Domini**

This is the day our Saviour was born; what a joy for us, my beloved! This is no season for sadness, this, the Birthday of Life - the Life which annihilates the fear of death, and engenders joy, promising, as it does, immortality.

Nobody is an outsider to this happiness. The same cause for joy is common to all, for as our Lord found nobody free from guilt when he came to bring an end to death and to sin, so he came with redemption for all. Let the saint rejoice, for he hastens towards his crown; let the sinner be filled with joy, for pardon is offered him; let the Gentile take courage, for he is called to life.

When the designated time had come, which God, in his deep and impenetrable plan had fixed upon, God's Son took the nature of humanity on himself in order to reconcile us to our Creator. In this way the Evil One would be overcome, by that self-same human nature which he had defeated.

Therefore the angels exult in his birth, and sing: *Glory to God in the highest heaven!*

## **Inter-Carol Reading**

**Thomas Hardy**      *The Oxen*

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.  
“Now they are all on their knees,”  
An elder said, as we sat in a flock,  
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek, mild creatures where  
They dwelt in their strawy pen,  
Nor did it occur to one of us there,  
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave  
In these years! Yet, I feel,  
If someone said, on Christmas Eve,  
“Come: see the oxen kneel,  
In the lonely barton by yonder coomb,  
Our childhood used to know,”  
I should go with him, in the gloom,  
Hoping it might be so.

## Inter-Carol Reading

### W H Auden     At the Manger

At the Manger  
Mary Sings

O shut your bright eyes, that mine must endanger  
With their watchfulness; protected by its shade  
Escape from my care: what can you discover  
From my tender look, but how to be afraid?  
Love can but confirm, the more it would deny.  
    Close your bright eye.

Sleep. What have you learned from the womb that bore you,  
But an anxiety your Father cannot feel?  
Sleep. What will the flesh that I gave do for you,  
Or my mother-love, but tempt you from His will?  
Why was I chosen to teach his Son to weep?  
    Little One, sleep.

Dream. In human dreams earth ascends to Heaven,  
Where no-one need pray, nor ever feel alone.  
In your first few hours of life here, O have you  
Chosen already what death must be your own?  
How soon will you start on the Sorrowful Way?  
    Dream, while you may.

## **Inter-Carol Reading**

**Mary Coleridge      Salus Mundi**

I saw a stable, low and very bare,  
    A little child in a manger.  
The oxen knew him, had him in their care,  
    To men he was a stranger.  
The safety of the world was lying there,  
    And the world's danger.