

The City Church, New York

The Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession – Sunday December 24, 2006
Christmas Eve

On this night in 1968, as so many prepared to celebrate the coming of the Christ Child – our Creator, Himself – the first astronauts to orbit the moon broadcast back to Earth the Genesis story of creation. We might have meditated then on G. K. Chesterton's wonderfully paradoxical words about the Christ Child: "The hands that made the sun and stars were too small to reach the huge heads of the cattle."

Let us pray.

Lord: We're overwhelmed that, into the void, in one miraculous moment in Christ, You began to create the heavens and earth – all time, all space. We're overwhelmed that, into the void of our hearts of rebellion, in one miraculous moment in Christ, You began to recreate us to be conformed to His image, the firstborn of many brethren.

The cosmos is too much for even our scientists to but begin to comprehend. Yet, with Your gift of our minds, we can discover something about it. And the more we learn, the more we learn we have so much more to learn. Knowledge of sin, though, is something closer to home. It's our daily experience. Lord, may a sober knowledge of our sin be matched with a saving knowledge of that Grace and Peace who came to earth on that first Silent Night. You came as a newborn baby, crying and kicking, just as we all came into this world. And we read that You grew up much as we have – "by learning, maturing in stature, by faith in God and friendship with others". Thank You for showing us Yourself as a helpless infant and as a man who endured sorrows as much – and much more – than we do. We can relate to a life more than to cosmology. Thank You for living a life like ours. Yet, You're the only child who ever chose to be born. You're the only man who ever could have laid down his life to save us from sin and death. Thank You for Your willingness to be made sin for us – You, who knew no sin of Your own – that, in Your righteousness, we might be made righteous. We can't grasp galaxies, we can't relate to rocks and rivers, for we're not made of mindless matter. But we do feel what it is to be flesh and blood and be loved and love. And we're just beginning to know what it is to be loved forever, by Love, Himself. May we love You in return and never stop loving You.

Bless us now in this sacred hour. May it be precious to us and pleasing to You to whom all praise is due. Thank You for hearing us as we pray as You taught us to pray, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.