

## CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

*Usher lights altar candles.*

### Opening Prayer

*Welcome and brief description of how the service will proceed. The following is a sample of the welcome and service:*

"A warm welcome to all of you on this very special Christmas Eve night. Following our service tonight you are all invited to the Multipurpose Room for some hot cider, tea, and refreshments.

We have gathered together this evening to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. We will be singing Christmas Carols together, interspersed with short readings from the Bible and the writings of Paramahansa Yoganada about Christ.

After the reading and the singing of each Christmas Carol, we will have a minute or two to enjoy the silence.

During the moments of silence, you can mediate or you might want to continue to sing the Christmas carol within or take a line from the carol to concentrate on it. But however you use that time, let's sit very still, so each person can go within.

Our guru, Paramahansa Yogananda, has taught us to sit very still, but be completely relaxed, with your feet flat on the floor, and your spine erect and away from the back of the pew if possible. With closed eyes, gently focus your gaze and attention at the point between the eyebrows, the point of spiritual perception, called the Christ Consciousness Center. You might also want to talk with God, or Christ using a phrase from your heart, such as, 'I love you Lord, I love you Lord'.

Yogananda has said, 'Do not take lightly the celebration of the birth of Jesus. These holy days should remind you of that great Christ – the divine life manifested by Jesus. Each year at Christmas time there are stronger than usual vibrations of Christ-love and JOY that emanate to earth from the heavenly realms. The ether becomes filled with the Infinite Light that

shone on earth when Jesus was born. Those who are in tune through devotion and deep meditation will receive in their own consciousness these vibrations of the universal consciousness that was in Christ Jesus. It is of utmost importance to everyone, whatever their religion, that they experience within themselves this birth of the universal Christ. ' "

So, let's take this opportunity to become aware of these "stronger than usual vibrations of Christ's love and Joy".

We will begin with singing JOY to WORLD and then 2 minutes of silence to go within.

.....**JOY TO THE WORLD**  
 .....**2 MINUTES OF SILENCE**

And now let us hear the story of the birth of Christ, as told in the Bible in the books of St. Luke and St. Mathew.

First, from St. Luke 2: 1-7), "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone around about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. "

Let's sing, O Holy Night, and then have a couple of minutes of silence.

## **O HOLY NIGHT**

**.....2 minutes of Silence**

"And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

And when they had seen it they made known abroad the saying which was told to them concerning this child.

And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

## **Let's sing – The First Noel**

**.....2 minutes of Silence**

Now from the book of St. Matthew, which tells us about the Three Wise Men.

"....and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

Paramahansa Yogananda has written in *The Second Coming of Christ* several interesting points about the wise men. First he says, "There is a very strong tradition in India, authoritatively known amongst high metaphysicians in tales well told and written in ancient manuscripts, that

the wise men of the East who made their way to the infant Jesus in Bethlehem were, in fact great sages of India...".

Second, he says that when the Three Wise Men visited the infant Jesus, they.....

“..... knelt and offered their symbolic gifts. These were the traditional gifts given in India to the newborn; but they held further meaning coming from the Wise Men to Jesus: Gold (a material treasure) is offered to a giver of wisdom as a symbol of appreciation of the great value of liberating truth bestowed by the spiritual teacher. Incense (the frankincense in this case) symbolizes devotion, the fragrance of the heart’s love offered to the master who is a channel through whom God’s guidance and blessings flow... The myrrh (which at that time could be used to prepare a body for burial.) was in recognition of the bitter trial and sacrifice that would be required of Jesus in fulfilling his divine mission.”

**Let’s sing – We Three Kings**  
**.....2 min of Silence**

Now we come to two of our last Christmas Carols, "Away in a Manger" which was one of Master's favorites, and "Silent Night", a perennial favorite. Each carol will be followed by a period of silence.

Paramahansa Yogananda tells us that “Christmas is intended as a celebration through which the devotee may find the spirit of Christ manifesting in his own consciousness. In this coming Christmas, think first how you can commune deeply with Christ.”

"Away in a Manger" is a children’s lullaby. We are all children of God and so tonight let's sing this carol from our hearts to Christ. If you hear a line from the Carol that you would like to repeat you can do that during our short period of silence after we sing it out loud.

**Away in a Manger...**  
**.....2 min of silence**

*[Prepare some additional quotes in case more reading is needed. Otherwise the remaining minutes can be spent in meditation, the final Carol and the closing prayer. Sample of additional quotes:]*

Some thoughts on Christ from Sri Daya Mata:

"Why do we revere Jesus Christ? Not for any worldly achievements usually associated with success on this mundane plane: Jesus had no material wealth, he owned no property, he had no formal education: he knew what it was to struggle and suffer; he was deserted by his friends, and he was crucified. It is because of his God-consciousness, and the shining example of the sweetness and humility of his life, that he has endured like a bright Eastern star lighting up the heavens for all humanity—not merely for those who embrace the external theology of Christianity, but for all souls around the world who deeply strive to know God."

She goes on to say:

"I used to feel that Jesus was a stranger, one to whom it was impossible to draw close because he was too far above my reach. But Master spoke about God and Christ in such a simple, sincere, personal and devoted way that we felt that we too could communicate with Them; we could relate to them in a personal way. This is the important ingredient that is missing in some of Christianity today- and in all religions. Man needs to establish with his Creator a sweet personal relationship; and that can come only by deep daily mediation. "

Throughout his teachings, Jesus tried to help man to relate directly and personally to the Infinite.

So with these thoughts in mind, let's sing our last Carol, "Silent Night", followed by meditation.

### **Silent Night followed by meditation**

Closing prayer

As we exit let's sing - **"We Wish You a Merry Christmas"**