

Nativity scenes as a symbol of love

“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.” (1 John 4:9)



Although frescos featuring nativity scenes date back to the third or fourth century CE, there are no records of three-dimensional nativity scenes until almost a thousand years later. In 1223, St. Francis of Assisi was granted papal approval to stage a live nativity with a hay-filled manger, an ox, and an ass in a cave in the Italian village of Greccio. Illiterate villagers gazed at the scene while Francis preached from Luke’s account of Jesus’ birth. Within a couple of centuries, such nativity scenes had spread throughout Europe. Each year during the Christmas season, 100,000 people visit the tiny village of Greccio. On his second visit, Pope Francis noted, “The Christmas crèche speaks to us of the love of God, the God who became a child in order to make us know how close he is to every man, woman and child.”

Look at a nativity scene and reflect on the mystery of incarnation: the Creator of the universe entered into our littleness, took on our vulnerability, became one of us that we might become one with God. Allow something of the enormity of God’s unconditional love to sink deep down inside of you.

Be an agent of love

Imitate Jesus: look for situations in which you can cede power, control, or privilege as an act of self-sacrificial love this week.