

The Creche

Saint Francis called it a “creche,” the French word for cradle. He created the first creche using real people, a real manger, a real ox and donkey, and real shepherds.

The Incarnation - Christmas - was a key component in the spirituality of Francis. He wanted to celebrate the Incarnation in a special way. He wanted to do something that would help people remember the Christ Child and how He was born in Bethlehem.

Francis wanted people to see and experience how He lay in a manger with an ox and a donkey standing by - how He lay upon the hay where He had been placed.

It was Christmas Eve in the year 1223. At the appointed time, Franciscan Brothers came to the new Bethlehem. Men, women, and children from the area also came to celebrate. The torches they carried lit up the night as they approached the creche. Once again, shepherds were walking in the night to come and adore Him. All were filled with joy over the mystery of the Incarnation. And a great tradition began.

As you look upon your Nativity set (creche), may you remember and celebrate again God’s love for His creation. To show His abundant love, mercy, and forgiveness, He became a person like us. This is what the creche symbolizes.

From The Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano