How to pray by the Crib like one of the people there

My advice is that, in your prayer, you actually take part in the different scenes of the Gospel, as one more among the people present. First of all, imagine the scene or mystery you have chosen to help you recollect your thoughts and meditate. Next apply your mind, concentrating on the particular aspect of the Master’s life you are considering – his merciful Heart, his humility, his purity, the way he fulfils his Father’s Will. Then tell him what happens to you in these matters, how things are with you, what is going on in your soul. Be attentive, because he may want to point something out to you, and you will experience suggestions deep in your soul, realising certain things and feeling his gentle reprimands. Friends of God, 253
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"And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger," (St Luke’s Gospel, 2: 12) the angel told the shepherds. Whenever I preach beside the crib, I try to see Christ our Lord as a child wrapped in swaddling clothes lying on straw in a manger. Even though he is only a child, unable to speak, I see him as a master and a teacher. I need to look at him in this way, because I must learn from him. And to learn from him, you must try to know his life – reading the Gospel and meditating on the scenes of the New Testament – in order to understand the divine meaning of his life on earth.

In our own life we must reproduce Christ’s life. We need to come to know him by reading and meditating on Scripture, and by praying, as we are doing now in front of the crib. We must learn the lessons which Jesus teaches us, even when he is just a newly born child, from the very moment he opens his eyes on this blessed land of men.

**Christ is Passing By, 14**

Christmas time. You write: “Together with the holy expectation of Mary and Joseph, I also impatiently await the Child. How happy I shall feel at Bethlehem! I have a feeling that I won’t be able to contain this joy without bounds. Yes, and with Him, I also want to be born anew!” – I hope you really mean what you say! **Furrow, 62**

Every time Christmas comes around, I love to look at representations of the child Jesus. Statues and pictures which show a God who lowered himself remind me that God is calling us. The Almighty wants us to know that he is defenceless, that he needs men’s help. From the cradle at Bethlehem, Christ tells you and me that he needs us. He urges us to live a Christian life to the full – a life of self-sacrifice, work and joy.

**Christ is Passing By, 18**

The greatness of this Child who is God! His Father is the God who has made heaven and earth and there he is, in a manger, “because there was no room at the inn” – there was nowhere else for the Lord of all creation. **Christ is Passing By, 18**
Jesus was born in a cave in Bethlehem because, Sacred Scripture tells us, “there was no room for them in the inn.”
I am not departing from theological truth when I say that Jesus is still looking for shelter in your heart. **The Forge, 274**

Make your way to Bethlehem, go up to the Child, take him in your arms and dance, say warm and tender things to him, press him close to your heart...
I am not talking childish nonsense: I am speaking of love! And love is shown with deeds. In the intimacy of your soul, you can indeed hug him tight! **The Forge, 345**

Now, in front of the infant Jesus, we can continue our personal examination of conscience. Are we ready to try to make our life a model and an example to our brothers and sisters, the rest of mankind, our equals? Are we ready to be other Christs? It’s not enough to say that we are. I am asking you now, as I ask myself: Can it be said also of you, you who have been called to be another Christ, that you have come to do and to teach, to do things as a child of God would? Are you attentive to the Father’s will, so as to be able to encourage everyone else to share the good, noble, divine and human values of the redemption? Are you living the life of Christ, in your everyday life in the middle of the world? **Christ is Passing By, 21**

“Going into the house they saw the child with Mary, his Mother, and they fell down and worshipped him.” We also kneel down before Jesus, God hidden in humanity. We tell him once more that we do not want to turn our backs on his divine call, that we shall never separate ourselves from him, that we shall remove from our path all that may be an obstacle to our fidelity and that we sincerely wish to be docile to his inspirations. You, in your own heart, and I in mine – because I am praying intimately with deep silent cries – are telling the child Jesus that we desire to fulfil our duties as well as the servants of the parable, so that we too may hear the response: “Well done, good and faithful servant.”. **Christ is Passing By, 35**
“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel’ (which means, God with us)” (St Matthew’s Gospel, 1: 23).

“The charity of Mary brought about the birth of the faithful into the Church, who are members of that head of which she is effectively the mother according to the flesh.” Mary teaches us as a mother does, and, being a mother, she does so quietly. We need to have sensitivity of soul, a touch of refinement, in order to understand what she is showing us, by what she does more than by what she promises. Friends of God, 284

At Christmas our thoughts turn to the different events and circumstances surrounding the birth of the Son of God. As we contemplate the stable in Bethlehem or the home of the Holy Family in Nazareth, Mary, Joseph and the Child Jesus occupy a special place in our hearts. What does the simple, admirable life of the Holy Family tell us? What can we learn from it?

When I think of Christian homes, I like to imagine them as being full of the light and joy that were in the home of the Holy Family. The message of Christmas is heard in all its forcefulness: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.” “And may the peace of Christ triumph in your hearts,” writes the Apostle. It is a peace that comes from knowing that our Father God loves us, and that we are made one with Christ. It results from being under the protection of the Virgin, our Lady, and assisted by St Joseph. This is the great light that illuminates our lives. In the midst of difficulties and of our own personal failings, it encourages us to keep up our effort. Every Christian home should be a place of peace and serenity. In spite of the small frustrations of daily life, an atmosphere of profound and sincere affection should reign there together with a deep-rooted calm, which is the result of authentic faith that is put into practice. Christ is Passing By, 22
Let us give thanks to God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and to Holy Mary, through whom all blessings from heaven come to us, for this gift which, along with our faith, is the greatest the Lord can bestow on any of his creatures. It is a clear desire to attain the fullness of charity, the conviction that sanctity is not only possible but necessary in the midst of our social and professional tasks. Christ is Passing By, 32

I will finish by repeating some words from today’s Gospel: “Going into the house they saw the child with Mary, his Mother.” Our Lady is always by her Son. The Magi are not received by a king on a high throne, but by a child in the arms of his Mother. Let us ask the Mother of God, who is our Mother, to prepare for us the way that leads to the fullness of love. Cor Mariae dulcissimum, iter para tutum: “Most Sweet Heart of Mary, prepare a safe way!” Her sweet heart knows the surest path for finding Christ. Christ is Passing By, 38
“When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife” (St Matthew’s Gospel, 1:24).

A decree of Caesar Augustus has been proclaimed, ordering the whole world to be enrolled. For this purpose, every person must go to the city of his ancestors. Since Joseph is of the house and family of David, he goes with the Virgin Mary from Nazareth to the city called Bethlehem, in Judea (Luke 2:1–5).

And in Bethlehem is born our God: Jesus Christ! There is no room at the inn: He is born in a stable. And His Mother wraps Him in swaddling clothes and lays Him in a manger. Cold. Poverty... I am Joseph’s little servant. How good Joseph is! He treats me like a father. He even forgives me if I take the Child in my arms and spend hour after hour saying sweet and loving things to Him!... Holy Rosary (Third Joyful Mystery)

Joseph loved Jesus as a father loves his son and showed his love by giving him the best he had. Joseph, caring for the child as he had been commanded, made Jesus a craftsman, transmitting his own professional skill to him. So the neighbours of Nazareth will call Jesus both faber and fabri filius: the craftsman and the son of the craftsman. Jesus worked in Joseph’s workshop and by Joseph’s side. What must Joseph have been, how grace must have worked through him, that he should be able to fulfil this task of the human upbringing of the Son of God! Christ is Passing By, 55
Saint Joseph, father of Christ, is also your father and your lord. Ask him to help you. 

_The Way, 559_

And a last thought for that just man, our father and lord St Joseph, who apparently has a very minor role in the Epiphany – as usual. I can imagine him recollected in prayer, lovingly protecting the Son of God made man who has been entrusted to his paternal care. With the marvellous refinement of one who does not live for himself, the holy patriarch spends himself in silent prayer and effective service.

We have talked today about practising a life of prayer and concern for apostolate. Who could be a better teacher for us than St Joseph? If you want my advice, which I have never tired of repeating these many years, _Ite ad Ioseph:_ “Go to Joseph.” He will show us definite ways, both human and divine, to approach Jesus. And soon you will dare, as he did, “to take up in his arms, kiss, clothe and look after” this child God who has been born unto us. As an homage of their veneration, the Magi offered gold, frankincense and myrrh to Jesus. Joseph gave his whole youthful and loving heart. _Christ is Passing By, 38_
And the angel said to them, “Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (St Luke’s Gospel, 2: 10–11).

Our Lord asks all men to come out to meet him, to become saints. He calls not only the Magi, the wise and powerful. Before that he had sent, not a star, but one of his angels to the shepherds in Bethlehem. Rich or poor, wise or less so, all of us have to foster in our hearts a humble disposition that will allow us to listen to the word of God.

Christ is Passing By, 33

Mary teaches us to have faith. “Blessed art thou for thy believing,” were the words of greeting uttered by her cousin Elizabeth when Our Lady went up into the hill country to visit her. Mary’s act of faith had been a wonderful one, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word.” When her Son was born she contemplated the greatness of God on earth: a choir of angels was present, and not only the shepherds, but also important men of this world came to adore the Child. Afterwards, however, the Holy Family had to flee to Egypt, to escape Herod’s murderous intent. Then, silence; thirty long years of simple, ordinary life, just like that of any other home in a small village in Galilee. Friends of God, 284
“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 among men with whom he is pleased!’” (Gospel of St Luke, 2: 13–14).

I ask Our Lord that, during our stay on this earth of ours, we may never be parted from our divine travelling companion. To ensure this, let us also become firmer friends of the Holy Guardian Angels. We all need a lot of company, company from Heaven and company on earth. Have great devotion to the Holy Angels! Friendship is a very human thing, but it is also very much a thing of God; just as our life is both human and divine. Don’t you remember what Our Lord says? “I no longer call you servants, but friends.” He teaches us to have a lot of confidence in those friends of God who are already in Heaven, and also in the people who are living with us on this earth, including those who seem to be far from the Lord, so as to attract them to the right path. **Friends of God, 315**

Heaven and earth join with the angels of the Lord to sing: **Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus...** Holy, Holy, Holy... I adore and praise with the angels – it is not difficult, because I know that, as I celebrate the holy Mass, they surround me, adoring the Blessed Trinity. And I know that in some way the Blessed Virgin is there, because of her intimate relationship with the most Blessed Trinity and because she is the Mother of Christ, of his flesh and blood – the Mother of Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect man. Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary most holy, not through the intervention of man, but by the power of the Holy Spirit alone. In his veins runs the blood of his Mother, the blood that is offered in the sacrifice of the redemption, on Calvary and in the Mass. **Christ is Passing By, 89**
"When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy" (St Matthew’s Gospel 2:10).

If vocation comes first, if the star shines ahead to start us along the path of God’s love, it is illogical that we should begin to doubt if it chances to disappear from view. It might happen at certain moments in our interior life – and we are nearly always to blame – that the star disappears, just as it did to the wise kings on their journey. We have already realized the divine splendour of our vocation, and we are convinced about its definitive character, but perhaps the dust we stir up as we walk – our faults and failings – forms an opaque cloud that cuts off the light from above.

What should we do if this happens? Follow the example of those wise men and ask. Herod made use of knowledge to act unjustly. The Magi use it to do good. But we Christians have no need to go to Herod nor to the wise men of this world. Christ has given his Church sureness in doctrine and a flow of grace in the sacraments. He has arranged things so that there will always be people to guide and lead us, to remind us constantly of our way. There is an infinite treasure of knowledge available to us: the word of God kept safe by the Church, the grace of Christ administered in the sacraments and also the witness and example of those who live by our side and have known how to build with their good lives a road of faithfulness to God. Christ is Passing By, 34

If your conscience tells you that you have committed a fault – even though it does not appear to be serious or if you are in doubt – go to the sacrament of penance. Go to the priest who looks after you, who knows how to demand of you a steady faith, refinement of soul and true Christian fortitude. The Church allows the greatest freedom for confessing to any priest, provided he has the proper faculties; but a conscientious Christian will go – with complete freedom – to the priest he knows is a good shepherd, who can help him to look up again and see once more, on high, the Lord’s star. Christ is Passing By, 34
“When they saw the star again they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.” Why were they so happy? Because those who never doubted receive proof from the Lord that the star had not disappeared. They had ceased to contemplate it visibly, but they had kept it always in their soul. Such is the Christian’s vocation. If we do not lose faith, if we keep our hope in Jesus Christ who will be with us “until the consummation of the world,” then the star reappears. And with this fresh proof that our vocation is real, we are conscious of a greater joy which increases our faith, hope and love. *Christ is Passing By, 35*

The three kings had their star. We have Mary, Star of the Sea, Star of the East. *

*Christ is Passing By, 38*
“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him’” (St Matthew’s Gospel, 2: 1–2).

We want to identify ourselves with Christ. It is not an easy goal. But it is not difficult either, if we live as our Lord has taught us to live, if we have recourse to his word every day, if we fill our lives with the sacramental reality, the Eucharist, which he has given us for our nourishment. Then the Christian’s path proves to be viable. God has called us clearly and unmistakably. Like the Magi we have discovered a star: a light and a guide in the sky of our soul. Christ is Passing By, 32

Look how gently the Lord invites us. His words have human warmth; they are the words of a person in love: “I have called you by your name. You are mine.” God, who is beauty and greatness and wisdom, declares that we are his, that we have been chosen as the object of his infinite love. We need a strong life of faith to appreciate the wonder his providence has entrusted to us. A faith like that of the Magi, a conviction that neither the desert, nor the storms, nor the quiet of the oases will keep us from reaching our destination in the eternal Bethlehem: our definitive life with God. Christ is Passing By, 32

We read in the Gospel that the Magi, when they saw the star, were filled with great joy. They rejoiced, they were immensely glad, because they had done what they were supposed to do; and they rejoiced because they knew for certain they would reach the King, who never abandons those who seek him. The Forge, 239
Jesus, may everyone in your Holy Church persevere in their way, following their Christian vocation, like the Wise Men who followed the star, spurning Herod’s advice – which will not be lacking. **The Forge, 366**

Let us give him gold. The precious gold we receive when in spirit we are detached from money and material goods. Let us not forget that these things are good, for they come from God. But the Lord has laid down that we should use them without allowing our hearts to become attached to them, putting them to good use for the benefit of all mankind. **Christ is Passing By, 35**

We offer frankincense that rises up to the Lord: our desire to live a noble life which gives off the “aroma of Christ.” To impregnate our words and actions with his aroma is to sow understanding and friendship. We should accompany others so that no one is left, or can feel, abandoned. Our charity has to be affectionate, full of human warmth. (...)

We have to behave as God’s children toward all God’s sons and daughters. Our love has to be a dedicated love, practised every day and made up of a thousand little details of understanding, hidden sacrifice and unnoticed self-giving. This is the “aroma of Christ” that made those who lived among our first brothers in the faith exclaim: “See how they love one another!”.

The ideal is not out of reach. A Christian is no Tartarin of Tarascon, a literary character bent on hunting lions in the corridors of his home, where they were not to be found. I always speak about real daily life, about the sanctification of work, of family bonds, of friendships. If we aren’t Christian in these things, where will we be Christian? The pleasant smell of incense comes from some small, hidden grains of incense placed upon the burning charcoal. Likewise is the “aroma of Christ” noticed among men – not in a sudden burst of flame, but in the constant red-hot embers of virtues such as justice, loyalty, faithfulness, understanding, generosity and cheerfulness. **Christ is Passing By, 36**

Together with the Magi we also offer myrrh, the spirit of sacrifice that can never be lacking in a Christian life. Myrrh reminds us of the passion of our Lord. On the cross he is offered wine mingled with myrrh. And it was with myrrh that his body was anointed for burial. But do not think that to meditate on the need for sacrifice and mortification means to add a note of sadness to this joyful feast we celebrate today.

Mortification is not pessimism or bitterness. Mortification is useless without charity. That is why we must seek mortifications which, while helping us develop a proper dominion over the things of this earth, do not mortify those who live with us. A Christian has no warrant to act as torturer, nor should he allow himself to be treated as a feeble wretch. A Christian is a man who knows how to love with deeds and to prove his love on the touchstone of suffering. **Christ is Passing By, 37**