CHRISTMAS VESPERS - DECEMBER 10, 1978

INVOCATION

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.
Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.
Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased its joy.
For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given.
And the government will be upon his shoulder, and, his name will be
called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Creator,
Prince of Peace."
Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end.

Let us pray,

0 Lord, our God, who has promised to show the light of your love to all peoples, and to shed that light abroad in our hearts, draw near to us now, we pray, as we celebrate the Incarnation of your Word.

Instill in our hearts a new song, full of these glad tidings.
Inspire us to live by the Spirit of this Holy Child.
Teach us anew to seek peace on earth, with good will toward all,
in every land and every place, in His Holy Name. Amen.

PRAYER

Let us pray,

0 God of ancient hopes, bow down to hear these fragile petitions, born of these uncertain days.

Help us, 0 God, to lift our voices with the angels praising your providence, although our hearts are heavy with the anguish of disappointment and despair. Inspire us to sing the angels' song of hope for the whole world to hear, although our minds are struggling to understand.

Help us, 0 God, to walk with the lowly shepherds, to hear and to obey your call for justice for all who dwell in darkness; those who are exiled from the commonwealth of your good earth, those who are beaten down by the might of oppressive governments, those who languish in prison, with no hope.

Help us also, 0 God, to venture forth with the wisemen, in search of that Wisdom that transcends the parochial world of our own assumptions and that unites the fragments of our several traditions, in a vision of unity and truth accessible to all.

But above all and through all, 0 God, as we sing with the angels, as we walk with the shepherds, as we search with the wisemen, help us always to see the Child of your eternal Grace, born in a stable. Inspire us in every way to come to Bethlehem and see, so that each one of us might know that in all things you are a God with us, our Immanuel. Amen.

BENEDICTION

May the Light of God enlighten your minds.
May the joy of the Holy Child renew your hearts.
And may the love of his Spirit dwell with you, and send you forth in his peace.

Amen.

— by the Rev. H. Paul Santmire
College Chaplain