



**SCRIPT:** **Rejoice!**  
*An Instant Pageant for the Tenth (or the Ninth or Eleventh or Twelfth) Day of Christmas*

**AUTHOR:** **The Rev. Donnel O'Flynn**  
*With thanks to the people of St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in Hamilton, New York*

*"Instant pageants" came about as an adaptation to busy modern schedules. Elaborate productions on Christmas Eve that require many rehearsals do not suit the realities of many families' lives. St. Thomas' Church in Hamilton, New York developed pageants that can be performed as the Liturgy of the Word on a Sunday morning near to Christmas, which only require one rehearsal the day before. By reserving all the speaking parts for older children who narrate and by having the congregation sing carols during scene changes, we have discovered a very effective model. For this pageant, hymns are chosen from The Hymnal 1982. We have found that complete rehearsals can in fact take place in less than two hours and that the final performances are well received. The cast can expand and contract as necessary, by using or not using some of the minor roles.*

*A couple of points a producer/director might want to bear in mind: You should pick a day for the rehearsal in which the public schools are either still in session (say late Advent) or when they have resumed after Christmas break (late Christmastide or Epiphany). You will want as many actors as possible to be part of the show, so the date you choose to have your pageant is one of the most important decisions you will make. It is perfectly okay to keep things simple. With only one rehearsal (almost immediately prior to the performance), elaborate costumes are not necessary for everyone. Very simple signifiers of a child's role will be fine. It is still necessary to create your cast list in advance so that a person in charge of wardrobe can have everything ready to hand out at the rehearsal. It is also helpful that narrators be given their parts in advance.*

*At the rehearsal: be calm, it will all work out! We have found that the best approach is to have the children set up each tableau in turn, without music or narration, as their first step. That way they will get their locations worked out, as well as the general sequence of the play. Then a second time through will allow the narration and perhaps some of the music to be added, and a third time through for good measure will have everyone amazingly well prepared. On the day of the pageant ask everyone to be there early to get the costumes on.*



## CAST:

Mary  
Joseph  
Angels (the Heavenly Host) (any number)  
Magi (three)  
Camel (2 persons needed)  
Camel attendant(s)  
Star of Bethlehem  
Shepherds  
Sheep  
Townsppeople (any number)

## NARRATORS:

Four

## COSTUMES:

**Virgin Mary** appears delicate and ethereal but not elaborate. Drape her in large pieces of soft fabric in a range of solid blues. Her head can be covered in a large square (secured by a stretchy headband) that flows over her shoulders and creates a soft but solid shape.

**Joseph** wears neutrals with a blue waist sash or long blue vest. No head cover.

**Angels** (Heavenly Host) are easily costumed with a white under layer topped by a white choir robe. Long lengths of rope can be tied high on the waist and criss-crossed around the body. Wire halos are hard to see in most church lighting. Instead, use head-sized Styrofoam wreaths (can be decorated but let the Star of Bethlehem have the most sparkle) and secure them with a flesh-colored elastic, under-the-chin strap or tied ribbon. Look for wings at a costume shop; they're a good investment—almost all church pageants have an angel or two!

The 3 **Magi** look imposing and richly colored. Actors can wear jackets for bulk underneath red/yellow/gold flowing robes. Heads wrapped, turban-like, for more bulk and height, short dark beards. They can carry urns, jars, or hinged boxes as gifts to the Christ child.





The **camel** requires two actors, both wearing brown pants and shoes; #1 in front carries the camel's head on a stick (dowel, broom handle) with a long, brown fabric drape attached at the neck to cover #1 and #2 over their bent, arched backs. #2 can attach a tail to his/her back end. The actors move as one unit, covered by long, brown fabric drape.

**Camel attendants** are dressed in earthy neutrals, rope belt, square cloth head cover (held in place with stretchy headband) sandals.

**Star of Bethlehem** looks best in white dancewear with as much sparkle as possible. Sparkle sources: Mardi Gras beads, tinsel, tinsel wire twisted into a garland for the head, star-shaped sandwich board that is spray-painted silver/gold and sprinkled with glitter. If the "star" will be cart-wheeling down the church aisle, make sure the costume stays secure.

**Shepherds and townspeople**, expanding or contracting as need be, represents unified enthusiasm for the new Lord. If possible, keep the colors consistent within each group for visual coherence; in either case, they should not compete in elaboration or color with the main characters. They can all be costumed over a layer of beige or brown under layer (pants, long sleeved tee shirts) and sandals. Shepherds can stay natural/neutral with burlap vests, fake-fur stoles (raggedly cut and pieced together like skins) robe belts, and shorter headscarves held in place with stretchy headbands; townspeople can wear darker, modestly colored (maybe striped) vests or gowns with colored waist sashes.

The **herd of sheep** will be a guaranteed "Awww" and easy to costume if populated by the youngest cast members. The under layer can be white with dark shoes and mittens. Scrounge up natural wool-colored fishermen's sweaters (Irish knits) even if they're over-sized, are a good over layer. Lamb ears and tails made from fake fur scraps complete the profile.



**SCENERY/  
PROPS:**

The props needed for this pageant are a doll (baby Jesus), a manger, a seat for Mary, and three containers for the gifts of the Magi.

**SCRIPT**

**SCENE 1:**

**An Echo of Angels**

*(The narrators are in place at the pulpit/lectern(s) at the beginning of the pageant. The script is designed for four narrators each reading two sections, but the arrangement is variable depending on numbers available.)*

*(Mary and Joseph take their places by the manger, Mary seated and Joseph standing. When they are in place the narrator begins.)*

**FIRST  
NARRATOR:**

It is now more than a week since the night sky over Bethlehem suddenly filled with brilliant angels. Nothing like it had ever been seen before! All the angels of God appeared to mortal eyes! They sang praises in the highest heaven, for Jesus the Lord is born. Ten days later the angels' song still echoes in the ears of all who heard it. Please join me in the singing the first two verses of Hymn 87, "Hark the herald angels sing."

*(During the singing the Heavenly Host appear and stand near the Holy Family. As verse two draws to a close the angels exit stage left. Mary and Joseph remain in their places during all the succeeding scenes.)*

**SCENE 2:**

**All is Calm, All is Quiet**

**SECOND  
NARRATOR:**

But now all is quiet. The angels have returned to heaven, and the shepherds have gone back to care for their sheep. The people in the Inn now pay little attention to the Holy Family. Mary and Joseph admire infant Jesus in peace. They wonder, time and again, what child is this? Please join me in the singing the first two verses of Hymn 115, "What child is this?"

*(When the hymn is ended the Magi, the camel, and their attendants enter the church at the foot of the main aisle. They make enough commotion to draw the congregation's attention. Then they pause and wait quietly during the narration, which follows.)*

