

## **Adoration of the Shepherds. Devout Visits to the Crib**

In the early dawn after the birth of Jesus, the three oldest of the shepherds came to the Crib Cave with the gifts they had gathered together. These consisted of little animals bearing some resemblance to deer. They were very lightly built and nimble, had long necks and clear, beautiful eyes. They

followed or ran along beside the shepherds who led them with fine, guiding cords. The shepherds carried also large, live birds under their arms, and dead ones slung over their shoulders.

They told Joseph at the entrance of the cave what the angel had told them, and that they had come to do homage to the Child of Promise and to offer Him gifts. Joseph accepted their presents and allowed them to lead the animals into the space that formed a kind of cellar near the side entrance of the cave. Then he conducted them to the Blessed Virgin, who was sitting on the ground near the Crib, a rug under her, the Infant Jesus on her lap. The shepherds, their staves resting on their arms, fell on their knees and wept with joy. They knelt long, tasting great interior sweetness, and then intoned the angelic canticle of praise, and a Psalm that I have forgotten. When they were about to take leave, Mary placed the Child in their arms.

Some of the other shepherds came in the evening, accompanied by women and children, and bringing gifts. They sang most sweetly before the Crib the some Psalms, and short refrains of which I remember the words: "O Child, blooming as a rose art Thou! As a herald Thou comest forth!" They brought gifts of birds, eggs, honey, woven stuffs of various colors, bundles of raw silk, and ears of corn, also several bundles of a corn with heavy grains growing on a stalk with large leaves like those of rushes.

