

Children's liturgy – The Nativity of the Lord

Preparing the worship space

Colour: white

Props: A crib, props and costumes for acting out the gospel story.

Welcome: Today is a very special day. It is Christmas day when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Even though he is the Son of God, Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger, not in a big palace or soft bed. Let's think a bit more about that today.

Song suggestions: Away in a manger (66, Celebration Hymnal for Everyone), While shepherds watched (810, Celebration Hymnal for Everyone).

Opening prayer: God of joy, you love the world so much that you sent your Son Jesus to show us how to live. Help us to recognise Jesus in all people. Amen.

First reading (optional): Isaiah 9:1-7

Psalm: Psalm 95:1-2a, 2b-3, 11-12, 13

Gospel acclamation: *everyone stands and sings the gospel acclamation together.*

Gospel: Luke 2:1-14

At that time the Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. When this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria. Everyone, then, went to register himself, each to his own town.

Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, the birthplace of King David. Joseph went there because he was a descendant of David. He went to register with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant, and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby. She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger — there was no room for them to stay in the inn.

There were some shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid, but the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David's town your Saviour was born — Christ the Lord! And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God:

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!”

(Gospel passage taken from Good News Translation® and used with permission, see details below)*

Gospel reflection: What do you remember from the gospel story today?

Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem. While they are there the time comes for Mary to have her baby.

There is no room in the inn and so Mary has her baby in a stable. She wraps Jesus up to keep him warm and lays him in a manger full of hay.

Do any of you have little brothers or sisters? Do you remember when they were born? Where were they born? How did you feel?

Jesus is a very special baby. Do you know why?

Would you expect such a special and important baby, the Son of God, to be born in a stable? Where would you expect him to be born? In a palace surrounded by lots of toys and nice things, perhaps?

Many people think that the more money someone has, the bigger their house is or the more toys and other nice things someone has, the more important that they are. Do you agree? Why? Why not?

But Jesus was born in a stable and Mary and Joseph were not able to give him lots of nice things. Do you think this makes him any less important? Why not?

Jesus came to show us a different way to live. How do you think Jesus would like us to live our lives? What would he like us to do?

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus today, let's give thanks for all that we have and try to live our lives as he has asked us, as part of one global family.

Intercessions: We celebrate the birth of Jesus and give thanks that he came to show us another way to live as we pray together:

We pray for all babies around the world: that they may be loved and cared for and grow up to reach their dreams. Lord, hear us...

We pray for all parents around the world: that they may be able to give their children a safe and happy childhood. Lord, hear us...

We pray for our parish, family and friends: that we may treat all people the same no matter whether they are rich or poor and that we may be generous in sharing all that we have with others. Lord, hear us...

For more children's liturgy resources and illustrations see cafod.org.uk/childrensliturgy

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Closing prayer: God of light, your Son Jesus was born in a stable. Help us to see that it does not matter if we are rich or poor, we are all special and loved by you. As we celebrate today, may we remember our brothers and sisters around the world. Amen.

Activity suggestions

Ask the children to colour in the accompanying illustration and to draw themselves visiting Jesus at the stable. Ask them about the sights, sounds and smells that they would experience if they were really there. Is it where they would expect to find such a special baby?

Get the children to act out the gospel reading.

Ask the children to tell their family all that they have heard and talked about today. Ask them to think over the coming week about what is really important in their lives and how Jesus would like them to treat others.

*Gospel passage taken from:

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