



After starting with a meal prayer and getting settled, read the passages below out loud, stopping to discuss the questions where they are included.

## The Nativity of Our Lord

from the Gospel according to Luke 2:4-20

Joseph went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

- How do you think Joseph and Mary must have felt to finally hold Jesus? Was the waiting worth it?
- A manger is what holds food for the animals - Why might it be symbolic that Jesus was laid in a manger, like food?

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

- Prophets had been foretelling the coming messiah (savior) for thousands of years - How do you think the shepherds were feeling at this moment?
- God could have sent his angels to anyone - Why do you think he announced the messiah's birth to poor shepherds?
- God could have come in any way he chose - Why do you think he came as a baby, in such a humble little way?
- Does the angels' song (Glory to God) sound familiar? These are the words of the Gloria that we sing at Mass each week!

When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

- Why do you think the shepherds when in "haste"?
- What do you think Mary thought after she saw and heard the shepherds?
- What do you think the shepherds did that night after they saw Baby Jesus?

## Activity & Prayer

[For this activity section, you will need the additional resource provided by the parish. If you don't have it, you can download it on our website]

- Complete your Advent activity: present the manger you filled or the crown you adorned to Jesus, or add the Jesse ornament for Christmas, or light your tree (use the attached blessing), or add your star or angel, etc. Make it a special celebration!
- Then, to help draw our attention to what is most important about the Holy Day of Christmas, enjoy some silence in the light. Dim the lights and light some candles near your nativity set, or replace your advent wreath candles with white candles, and/or sit by the lit Christmas tree. Display the attached image of the nativity if you don't have a nativity nearby. Spend what amount of time seems appropriate for your family enjoying the greatest gift we have received - Jesus, the light of the world! When you are finished, share one thing that you thought of or that struck you while you were gazing upon the nativity. (See the extras below for more details on this image of the nativity and it's symbolism.)
- End with this Prayer Before a Creche (nativity): *Lord Jesus, together with the shepherds we draw near to your crib. We contemplate you, wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in the manger. O Babe of Bethlehem, we adore you in silence with Mary, your ever-Virgin Mother. To you be glory and praise forever, O Savior of the world. Amen.*
- Then sing a Christmas carol or two.

## Extras

Search "Christmas" on FORMED for many results including:

- Deeper look at the painting Adoration of the Shepherds

<https://watch.formed.org/formed-now-1/season:1/videos/sacred-art-the-nativity>

- The Manger and the Eucharist talk by Dr. Barber

<https://watch.formed.org/videos/christmas-as-christ-s-mass-the-manger-and-the-eucharist-by-dr-michael-barber>

- The Story of Christmas: An Audio Drama for Kids

<https://watch.formed.org/videos/the-story-of-christmas-an-audio-drama-about-the-first-christmas>

- Christmas with the Annie Moses Band (background music for a party)

<https://watch.formed.org/videos/o-holy-night-annie-moses-band>

- And much more!

## Sacramental Life

For both First Communion and Confirmation Students: Make a journal entry about your experience of Christmas - how did you experience Jesus?

For Next Week, Dec 28: **Looking Ahead**

- We will celebrate the new year and related feast days in the Dec 28 COR sheet - look ahead as a family to schedule a time to spend together, perhaps on the feast of the Holy Family (Dec 30) or Mother of God (Jan 1). It will include ideas for celebrating New Year's Eve!
- See the parish or website for additional handouts

Upcoming Events:

- Confirmation AND First Reconciliation/Communion Students - your whole family should plan to attend on Jan 11 6-8 pm at St Augustine for a formation night.

