

Read



Isaiah 9:1-6

Psalms 96:1-2, 2-3,
11-12, 13

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-14

LIVING THE WORD

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) Mass during the Night

December 25, 2019



REFLECTION

As we celebrate Christmas, we celebrate the incredible gift of God's love. When we gather with family and friends around the manger, we rediscover the immense love God holds for each of us. When we sing Christmas carols, we remember the joy of God's love that penetrates even the darkness of our lives. When we exchange Christmas greetings, we live the relational love of God, present and active in our world. While God extends this love through the gift of the Incarnation, it certainly is not one-sided.

Nourished by the love of God incarnate in our own lives, we have the responsibility to share this love through our words and actions. Like the shepherds and angels, we cry out, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to people of good will." But words are never enough. We must take concrete steps to help make that peace on earth a reality, working to cultivate peace in our families, countries, and world. God's love through the Incarnation compels us to care for people who are marginalized. God's love through the Incarnation compels us to care for people who are hurting. God's love through the Incarnation compels us to care for people who may be ignored or forgotten. God's love through the Incarnation compels us to care for others.

As we celebrate the incredible gift of the Incarnation, what will you do continue to make God incarnate in our world today?



ACTION

As you listen to the Christmas carols throughout the season, pay attention to the ways each song speaks to God's love as revealed through the Incarnation. Then, pick one Christmas carol in particular and carefully examine the images and lyrics. How do these words specifically call you to action as you strive to live the Incarnation? When you hear this song on the radio in your car, at the mall, or anywhere else, take a moment then to tell someone you are with about the deeper call of the Christmas message found in that particular song and why it speaks so deeply to you.



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? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Which characters in today's Gospel do you most relate with? What calls you to connection with them?
- ❖ How does the Incarnation bring hope to your own life?

Introduction to **CHRISTMAS TIME**



The Season

Merry Christmas! It can be sad and frustrating that Christmas Time is often lost in sentimentality, stressful family tradition, out-of-control gift giving, and the prevailing belief that it is a day, not a season. While the focus of Christmas Time is on God's great love for humanity, which requires preparation, a period of celebration, and time for reflection, it is not uncommon to hear people say how grateful they are that Christmas is over on December 26! Those who leave Christmas decorations up until the end of the season may be viewed by neighbors and friends as either lazy or unduly nostalgic! Keeping the season of Christmas is worth the misunderstanding of others, however. The Gospel passages for this season are filled with familiar stories that bear repeating. And these are stories that we grow into as time passes. While children love the story of the baby Jesus, teens and adults may find themselves grasping small details and the larger themes of the season with greater depth each year.

This holy season provides time for us to immerse ourselves in the mysteries of God's love, our responsibility for ourselves and others, and the ways in which faith and life intersect through the decisions we make, the relationships we nurture, and the impact we have on the people around us. Christmas Time truly is a blessed season; a time of grace and wonder, a moment in which to linger spiritually, with lasting impact in our lives, relationships, and the way we love, now and into the future.

Celebrating Christmas Time with Teens

Christmas Time is a season that is filled with many emotions. Teens likely look forward to Christmas as a season they remember from the time they are very young. Like many adults, they anticipate time with family, the giving of gifts, and time away from the regular routines of school and activities. They may also approach Christmas tenderly or with anxiety if family members are estranged or if some are not (or no longer consider themselves) Catholic. Such situations may feel like open wounds at this time of the year. Open discussions among your teens will be of great benefit in this season of life and grace.

Preparing the Liturgical Environment

Use Christmas white lavishly to help set the tone for your gatherings with the youth in this season. Some pine boughs and candles will add a touch of the special quality of the season. The crèche (nativity scene) is a perfect accompaniment to your Christmas prayer area, along with the Bible open to the one of the Christmas narratives or a song book with a favorite carol displayed.



December 24 and 25, 2019

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)

LECTIONARY #14ABC

Isaiah 9:1-6

Psalm 96:1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-14

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

As Advent's waiting closes, Christmas Time begins, and we are reminded of the promise and waiting that was fulfilled in Christ's birth so many centuries ago. Born in austere poverty and into great love, our Lord was welcomed by his parents. Fully human and fully divine, he uniquely knew human nature and human life.

Q FOCUS: *The King of Kings is born in the lowest of places.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

After finding Christmas day on the liturgical calendar, examine the number of days in the season, and take note of the many special days the Church observes in that time period. Ask the students if they are unfamiliar with any of the holydays, and help them learn about those days.

Church Teaching Connection

"The Word became flesh so that thus we might know God's love: 'In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.' 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life'" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 458; quoting 1 John 4:9 and John 3:16).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 2:1-14

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too 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.

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 Christ 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."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

Our Advent wait reminds us of the centuries that God's people waited for the promised Messiah. Like that day so long ago, our wait has ended, and we welcome Jesus into our hearts, minds, and actions.

► **How do you welcome Jesus into your heart, mind, and action?**

In this very familiar reading we hear about grace, and the coming of our Jesus Christ into this world. The first notable detail is the deep poverty into which our Lord was born. The Gospel writer first mentions Caesar Augustus and Quirinius, the governor of Syria before addressing the arrival of the King of Kings. Caesar Augustus was a powerful man, whose very word that the people should be counted meant that every person in his land must obey the order. Quirinius was another man with

great political power and control in Syria. Then, entering the story, a husband and his young wife, heavy with child and very late in pregnancy. This couple traveled because of Caesar's order. Without the comfort of her mother, without her familiar home or even a bed, the Virgin Mary gave birth in a stable. There, in the midst of orders from faraway Caesar and in the squalor of a barn, the King of Kings took his first breath, uttered his first cry, blinked as his eyes perceived his mother, and had his hungry belly filled.

► **Have you ever prayed the Angelus prayer?**

In this prayer, when we say that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," we mean it very literally. The Word, or *Logos*, is Jesus, and he was living among us, fully human in all ways except sin. Jesus was not created a fully grown man, who showed up one day preaching the Gospel. Nor was Jesus exclusively a spiritual being who took on a body just to pass on some information from God. Jesus was not half man and half God, turning one or the other on or off as it suited him. Jesus was incarnate, meaning he was fully God and fully human. He was God, who took on flesh and all that it meant to be human. When we say he dwelt among us, we mean that he took on every bit of the human experience—birth, infancy, learning to walk, read, and write. He was mothered and fathered by his parents, just as you are parented by yours.

► **Why does the poverty of Jesus' birth matter so much?**

Jesus joined us in our humanity so that we might turn to his holiness and attempt to echo it in our own lives. The ordinariness of Jesus' humanity is part of what makes our God so very extraordinary. Instead of arriving in power and majesty, our Lord arrived in dependence and helplessness. Jesus showed us that we do not need grandeur and power to have favor with God, instead we need humility and meekness to grow in relationship with him. Our Lord knows what it is to walk in this world. He uniquely knows our pains, sorrows, fears, and joys because as a human person, Jesus too experienced such occasions in his own life. Today we remember our Lord coming into the world as a tiny baby, fully human, fully God, and filled with love for all of us.

► How does your life echo Jesus' life?

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 98.

When you think about Jesus being fully human and fully God, what amazes you most about this reality of our Lord?

If you could ask Mary and Joseph questions about Jesus, what would those questions be?

How has your understanding of the incarnation changed as you have matured in the past few years?

Act on the Word

Treating Others as Christ Himself

If we could, all of us would rush to Mary and Joseph with an array of baby items, clean clothes, and hot meals. While we cannot do exactly that, today in our country, women are still having babies in very difficult situations. Some are very young and unprepared to be mothers; others are impoverished and lack the most basic baby care items such as diapers and baby clothes. Make arrangements to collect items for newly born babies and their mothers. Collect items such as diapers, baby wipes, and basic clothing (do not accept used items like cribs and car seats for safety and legal reasons). Make arrangements to deliver these items to a local crisis pregnancy center, homeless shelter, or domestic violence shelter.

Titles of Jesus Bookmark

You will need card stock, pens, and markers.

Cut card stock to create an oversized bookmark for each young person. Together, go through Scripture (concentrating on Isaiah and the Gospel accounts) and compose a list of titles that Jesus bears (for example, "Wonderful Counselor," "King of Kings," "Teacher"). Each student can print these titles on his or her bookmark and artistically embellish it. They can use these bookmarks at home in their Bibles or other books.

Closing Prayer

*Lord Jesus Christ,
you are God from God, Light from Light,
Prince of Peace.*

Hear our prayers this Christmas.

*Forgive our sins, heal our divisions, calm our fears;
open our eyes to behold your Light which no
darkness can overcome.*

You live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.