

# Read

Isaiah 9:1-6

Psalm 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)

December 24 and 25, 2020



## REFLECTION

The angel's appearance and message to the shepherds in today's Gospel may seem strangely familiar. (Think back to the Gospel for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, in which Gabriel comes to Mary.) The shepherds were afraid at the sight of the angel but were quickly reassured. At first, fear might seem like an odd emotion to think about at Christmas in the midst of celebrating joy and peace. Even so, take a moment to reflect on that emotion in light of the season of Christmas. What causes you to fear, and how does the fear inhibit you from fully celebrating the joy and peace of Christmas? Christmas is a celebration of the Incarnation, where God becomes human. If we remember that the Incarnation intimately connects us to God, what do we need to fear?

## ACTION

As you go through the season of Christmas, take notice of little reminders of the Incarnation. How do you experience God's presence in your daily activities? How do you experience God at work or in class or at practice? How do you experience God in your family and friends? As you notice these encounters, take a moment and thank God for the incredible gift of the Incarnation.



Read (or reread)  
*A Christmas Carol*  
by Charles Dickens  
and consider how your  
encounter with Christ  
transforms your life.

## QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What are you most hopeful for during this Christmas season?
- ❖ How can you share the Good News of Christ with others during Christmas?



# December 24 and 25, 2020

## SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)

### LECTIONARY #15ABC

The readings are from the Mass at Dawn.

Isaiah 62:11-12

Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12

Titus 3:4-7

Luke 2:15-20

## 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

Christmas is about much more than commemorating the birthday of Jesus. It is such a momentous occasion to mark because that infant in a manger was the Messiah, the one who had been promised by God for generations. During this season, we are encouraged to take time to consider this amazing act of love that God did for humanity. He sent his only Son so that we might be saved from our sins. The response of the shepherds, as well as Mary's response, helps to remind us to approach this season with wonder and awe and share the Good News with others.

**Q FOCUS:** *We rejoice, for Christ, the Messiah, has come and dwells among us!*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

Share with the teens how the Church has four distinct liturgies for the celebration of Christmas. There is the Vigil Mass, the Mass during the Night, the Mass at Dawn, and the Mass during the Day. Each of these masses has its own set of readings. For example, the "Living the Word" page for Christmas used the readings from the Mass during the Night, while the readings for today's session are from the Mass at Dawn. Having different sets of readings allows us to experience different aspects of the mystery of the Incarnation. You may want to read Luke

2:1-14 as a group before continuing with today's session. (This is the reading the "Living the Word" page is based on.)

### Church Teaching Connection

"He who is the 'image of the invisible God' ([Colossians] 1:15), is himself the perfect man who has restored in the children of Adam that likeness to God which had been disfigured ever since the first sin. Human nature, by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare. For, by his incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each individual. . . . Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin" (*Gaudium et spes*, 22).

## 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 2:15-20

**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.*

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.

**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:*

► **Are you able to connect with Jesus' birth story? How does this Gospel reading contrast with the popular Christmas narrative society presents (for example, Santa, regional traditions, holiday movies, etc.)?**

Society distracts and tempts us away from the real Christmas story. Christmas Time (the entire season, from Christmas until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord) allows us the opportunity to rest in the celebration of God sending his Son, our Lord, to live as human with us. This liturgical time is radically different from the general societal celebration of Christmas, which focuses on the days leading up to Christmas, rather than those following it. However, we are called to be like Mary, and reflect on these times, resting in the presence of Christ.

► **We hear of the angels departing from the shepherds; why do you think the angels had appeared to the shepherds?**

We hear in Luke 2:1–14 of the angels appearing to the shepherds to announce Jesus' birth. They proclaim Jesus to be the Messiah—the one for whom all of Israel had been waiting. Shepherds were part of the lower class, not a group most people would have considered important enough to receive such

momentous news. However, as Jesus would do in his own ministry, God sought out the least among others and proclaimed the Kingdom of God to them.

► **What group of people today would be the ones to hear the message of angels if they announced it now?**

► **What does this tell you about who you should be reaching out to in your acts of discipleship?**

Hearing the angel's instructions must have been thrilling and scary at the same time. Yet the shepherds set out to find the promised Messiah.

► **How do you think they felt when they found their longed-for Messiah as a small infant in a manger?**

► **How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when they heard the message of the angels that the shepherds told them?**

► **How would you have reacted if the shepherds shared their news with you?**

As followers of Jesus now, one would hope that we would have believed the shepherds story and flocked to see the baby Jesus. In doing so, we would have bucked with tradition, potentially sacrificed our jobs and risked being ignored or chastised by our families. In some ways, these risks still exist today. To stand up for your beliefs in a world that would rather tear you down is risky and takes a lot of personal resolve.

► **How can we spend this Christmas season reflecting on this life-changing news of Jesus' Incarnation? What are we called to do with this Good News?**

Mary's wisdom shines through in this Gospel account of the nativity of Christ. She knows her son is not her own but from God. She is aware that Jesus must spend his life following the will of God, rather than her dreams for her child. However, she has complete trust in God, so she is able to rest in him.

## 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 94.*

**God is made flesh in Jesus, who is our Lord and Savior.**

**Like the shepherds, we stand in awe of God's gift to us in the person of Christ.**

**We must take time to reflect on the Good News of Jesus.**

## Act on the Word

### Receiving a Precious Gift

*You will need pens and journals or paper.*

Have the young people spend some time journaling by reflecting on the following prompt: Throughout Advent, we have been preparing ourselves for the coming of Jesus, both at Christmas and at the end of time. In preparing our homes and hearts, we must also reflect on our readiness to receive. It is sometimes easy to forget Christ in the busyness of Christmas because society distracts us from the true meaning of Christmas by marketing gifts and foods

that we just have to have for a perfect celebration. How can you reclaim Christmas as a season in which we receive Christ into our lives? How can you incorporate Jesus into your celebrations and time with family and friends? What will you do with the gift of Christ? How will you share him with others?

## Closing Prayer

*Lover of humankind,  
by the Incarnation of your Son,  
you invite us to love and to ponder more deeply  
the mystery of our wondrous humanity.  
May we be confident in your gift of redemption.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, 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](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*