

St. Joseph's Family Activities

The 12 days of Christmas Years A, B & C

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St. Joseph is the patron saint of the family, and the family is the “domestic Church.” These sheets were originally developed to support my parish of St. Joseph in Great Malvern, Worcestershire, but they are now used by parishes and schools not just in the UK, but some are sent to contacts abroad as well.

There are Four Dimensions of our Faith, and the activities all reflect one or more of each of these dimensions.

**Professing the faith
(speaking about it and
learning the faith)**

**Celebrating our faith in
the liturgy and the
sacraments**



**Living the faith in Christ
(making choices by the
grace of Jesus Christ)**

**A prayer-filled life where
the Our Father takes
centre stage**

Centre image: Tapestry in the Vatican museums of the adoration of the Magi, from an original cartoon by Raphael. Note that the wise man is kissing Jesus' foot →

→ taking His flesh to his lips. This is indicative of Holy Communion when we, like the wise men, worship Jesus Christ and take Him to our lips.

A special Christmas Edition:

A Blessed Christmas to you all. The Christmas song *Twelve days of Christmas* has a long and uncertain history, but contrary to popular belief it did not originate as a secret code during the Reformation for Catholics to pass on the Good News of Jesus Christ. That said, we can still use these associations for reflection and discussion as they will remind us all about the deeper meaning of Christmas and our salvation in Christ.

Christmas to the Baptism of the Lord:

These notes cover most of the liturgical celebrations from Christmas to the Baptism of the Lord in January. This edition also covers all three liturgical years, and none of the main liturgies other than Christmas Day and Mary, Mother of God are ascribed to a specific date, as the day of Christmas affects the celebration of many of the other feasts and solemnities over this period. Where the Gospel differs from one year to the next, I have included all three versions.

The feast of the Holy Family:

I have placed the readings for Feast of the Holy Family immediately after Christmas as it moves according to the day of the week Christmas is celebrated. Normally it's celebrated on the Sunday in the Octave of Christmas, but if that is the 1st January, then the Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God is celebrated. I have not included a suggested activity as each of the 12 days of Christmas have related activities, but if you are leading this at a Children's liturgy, how about gathering a collection of Christmas cards showing the Holy Family and making a display poster. Or find a version of the Holy Family Icon to copy and colour in. Note that the best versions of these icons are those where St. Joseph is not holding Christ as don't forget He is not Jesus' biological father but His protector and guardian.

I wish you a holy and happy Christmas and as ever, I always appreciate feedback and photos if you have any, of the resources being used.

The Gospel for Christmas

Gospel

Luke 2:1-14

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.'

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!'

The Gospel of the Lord

R/: *Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ*

25th December, the First Day of Christmas

Discussion on the Gospel



- ✚ Light Your Christmas candle
- ✚ Make the Sign of the Cross
- ✚ Someone read the Gospel slowly

This is the Gospel that is read at midnight Mass. On Christmas morning the Church uses the beautiful prologue from John's Gospel which proclaims that this child is the eternal Word of God who has come to dwell amongst us. However, for children this Gospel is a bit easier to understand.

Q: Who was in the countryside near to Bethlehem? (A. Shepherds.)

Q: Who appeared to them? (A. The Angel of the Lord.)

Q: What did the angel say? (A: He brought news of great joy/do not be afraid...etc.)

Q: The angel refers to Jesus as “a Saviour who is Christ the Lord”. Why is Jesus called a Saviour? (A: Because when Jesus died on the Cross, He saved us from our sins.)

Q: What does it mean, that Jesus “saved us from our sins”? (A: We have all sinned [done bad things] and so because of that, we wouldn't be able to go to heaven, but Jesus died on the cross and so we can go to heaven.)

Q: Traditional Christmas cards often have indications that Jesus is born to save us, or that He is God who is born for us. See if you can see any of these things in the cards in your home:

Cross-shapes – look at the stable structure or is the star cross-shaped?

Halos – these show that the people portrayed are now saints – often Jesus will have a halo with a red cross in it.

Jesus is wrapped in a white cloth – reminds us both of the Gospel story of today and the white cloth He was wrapped in for his burial after His death.

Worshipping – do people in the scene kneel before baby Jesus; Mary, Joseph, shepherds, the wise men...

Finish by singing “O come all ye faithful” or just the chorus, “O come let us adore Him!”

1st Day of Christmas, a Partridge in a Pear Tree

On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me, A partridge in a pear tree.

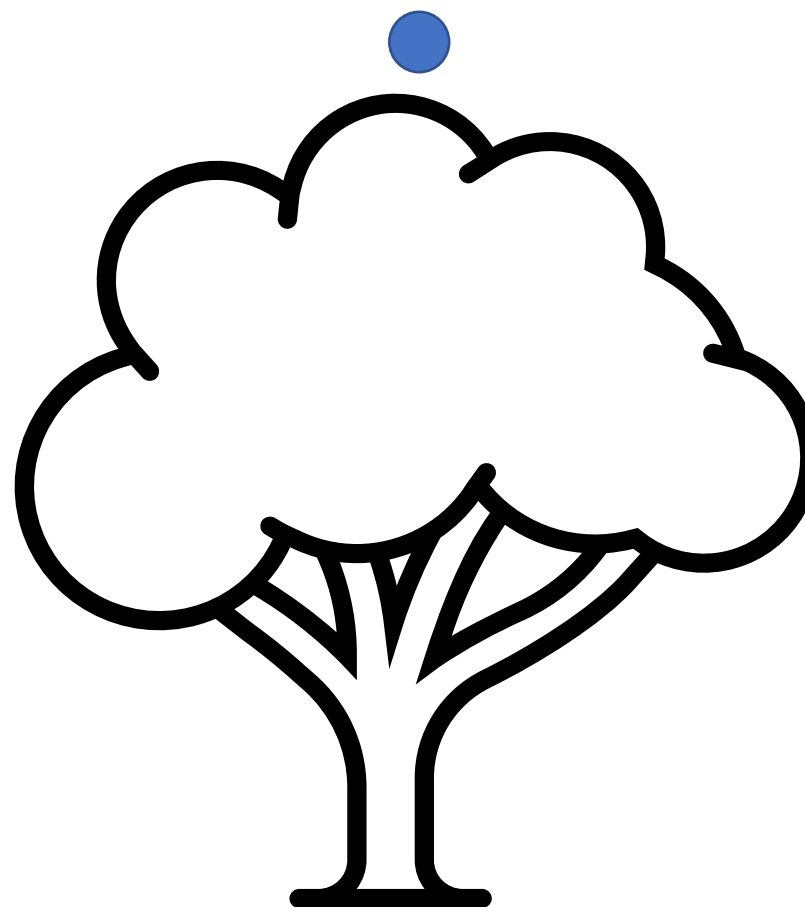
1. The one Jesus Christ (who was to die on a tree/cross).

Our heavenly Father is our true love as He created us out of love so that we might know and love Him and live with Him in perfect communion and love for all eternity.

We try to find satisfaction in so many ways, but only God will fully satisfy us. It's as if we are created with a "God-shaped" hole in us and we try to fill it with all sorts of wonderful things, such as church, family, work, hobbies, shopping.... St. Augustine, who was a saint in the 4th and 5th centuries tried to find happiness in all sorts of different ways, but finally he realised that only God would make Him perfectly happy. He said, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in you" (Confessions).

The Father, our true love, has given us one very special and important gift - His own Son. So, the number 1 represents Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God and most precious gift we can ever receive from our loving Father, our true love.

Draw Jesus standing beside this tree. Maybe you can put a partridge and some pears in the tree).



Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us your beloved Son, Jesus Christ at Christmas. May His Holy Spirit pour into our hearts so that we can love you as much as you love us. Amen

Sunday within the Octave of Christmas; Year A

Feast of the Holy Family



Feast of the Holy Family Year A

Gospel **Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23**

When the Magi had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.'

And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod.

This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

'Out of Egypt I called my son.'

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 'Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead.'

And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.

But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee.

And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

The Gospel of the Lord

R/: *Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ*

Discussion on the Gospel

- ✠ Light your Christmas candle
- ✠ Make the Sign of the Cross
- ✠ Someone read the Gospel slowly

We see here, St. Joseph taking care of Mary and Jesus. Luke does not cover the visit of the Wise men, nor the slaying of the infants and the subsequent journey to Egypt and back. But this is a lovely opportunity to reflect on families who are displaced due to war and other tragedies.

Q: Where did Joseph take Mary and Jesus? (A: To Egypt)

Q: Why did they do that? (A: Because an angel told Joseph to, because King Herod wanted to kill all the baby boys [they may pick up the reason St. Matthew gives as well, to fulfil the prophet, but don't labour this if they do.]

Q: Where did they go to after this? (A: Nazareth in Galilee.)

Q: It must have been very stressful for Mary and Joseph having to go to Egypt to escape Herod with Jesus when He was such a young child. Who do we know who has had to leave their home because of difficult times? (A: Open.)

Q: The angel was a messenger from God the Father, so we know that He was looking after Mary, Joseph and Jesus. When we hear about people having to move away from their homes in difficult times, who can we ask to help them? (A: Open, but we can talk about praying for them as well as giving practical help.)

Q: Let us think about us, we know that God the Father was looking after the Holy Family, what good things has God done for us? (A: Open, again lead the children to think about their blessings.)

Let's finish by praying the "family prayer" of the Church, "Our Father...."

Sunday within the Octave of Christmas; Year B

Feast of the Holy Family



Feast of the Holy Family Year B

Gospel Luke 2:22, 39-40

(This is the short version)

When the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

And when Joseph and Mary had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom.

And the favour of God was upon him.

The Gospel of the Lord

R/: *Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ*

Discussion on the Gospel

- ✠ Light your Christmas candle
- ✠ Make the Sign of the Cross
- ✠ Someone read the Gospel slowly

As Jesus is God, he does not need to be consecrated to God; (just as, in a few days when we will celebrate His Baptism, being sinless, He has no need of baptism to wash away His sins and being God He has no need of Baptism to unite Him to God.) It's important to realise that Mary and Joseph follow the Law as it is set out. Jesus, later in His public ministry will show that the Law is a guide to lead people to God the Father and will show the depth of its meaning in His teaching. But for the present, let's dwell on the image of God Himself coming into the Temple which was built to house His presence!

Q: Where did Jesus' parents take Him? (A: To the Temple to be purified.)

Q: Why did they do that? (A: Because it was the Law.)

Q: Where did they go back to after this? (A: Nazareth.)

Q: We know very little about Jesus growing up, but there is one other event that the Bible refers to in the Gospel of Luke about Jesus' childhood. Does anyone know what that is? (A: When Jesus was found in the Temple after He stayed behind, when He was about 12 years old (Lk. 2:41-51).)

Q: The Temple was a very special place for the Jews, because they believed that God "lived" there on earth. However, Jesus lives in our churches too. Where is that? (A: In the tabernacle.)

Q: How do we acknowledge Jesus' presence in the Tabernacle in our churches? (A: We go down on one knee (genuflect) and make the Sign of the Cross)

Q: Jesus learned to pray in the context of His earthly family. He went to the synagogue each week and learned to know and love the Scriptures. What can we do as a family to pray more and better in the coming year? (Open.)

Q: How can Jesus "live" in our homes in the coming year? (Open, but you can suggest putting up holy pictures, praying together, making a focal table which reflect the Church's seasons of the year etc..)

Pray the Our Father together as a family, recognising that we also belong to the whole family of God.



Feast of the Holy Family Year C

Gospel

Luke 2:41-52

The parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. After three days they found him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, 'Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.' And he said to them, 'Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man. The Gospel of the Lord. R/: *Praise to you Lord Jesus*

Feast of the Holy Family

Discussion on the Gospel

✠ Light your Christmas candle etc...

There are several messages here: the centrality of the Temple in Jewish worship and culture then, the importance of the Passover, and of course Jesus as a child learning to do His Father's work. Don't forget that as Jesus is God, His action was not a sin as sin separates us from God. We only know what the Bible tells us about this incident, so it is important not to load it with C21 presuppositions and ideas. A point to note on the Jewish way of counting days: the day you are on is the first day, so "three days" is really the day after next. Still for parents who have ever lost a child 3 minutes is scary! It's better to focus on the fact that Jesus came to do His Father's will and when we go to Mass, we are also doing the Father's will.

Q: Where did Jesus' parents take Him every year? (A: To the Temple in Jerusalem.)

Q: What happened at the end of the feast? (A: Mary and Joseph started to go back home.)

Q: What did Mary and Joseph realise once they had started on their way home? (A: That Jesus was not with them.)

Q: What did they do then? (A: Look for Him everywhere and eventually go back to Jerusalem.)

Q: What was Jesus doing when they found Him? (A: He was sitting in the Temple listening to the teachers.)

Q: When we go to Mass, we are in God's house. When do we listen to God the Father's teachings? (A: In the readings and prayers and in the teaching of the priest in the homily.)

Q: Jesus then went back with Mary and Joseph and increased in wisdom; that meant that He learned more and more about His heavenly Father. How can we learn more and more about God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit? (Open.)

Finish by praying the "Our Father" together.



Feast of St. Stephen

First reading Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59

In those days: Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.

Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen.

But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him.

But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

And he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'

But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him.

Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him.

And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'

The Word of the Lord
R/: *Thanks be to God*

Discussion on the Reading

- ✚ Light your Christmas candle
- ✚ Make the Sign of the Cross
- ✚ Someone read the reading slowly

We move from the wonder and excitement of Christmas day and down to earth with a bump! This Jesus whose birth we have celebrated with such joy is a life-changer and today we celebrate the Church's first Martyr (proto-martyr), St. Stephen. He was one of the first deacons of the Church which is why those who serve at the altar (note, not ON the altar) consider him to be their patron saint. This is also the "feast of Stephen" mentioned in the carol "Good King Wenceslaus".

Q: What was Stephen filled with? (A: Grace and power.)

Q: Who had filled Stephen with this grace, power and wisdom? (A: The Holy Spirit.)

Q: What was the reaction of the other people? (A: They were not happy and "ground their teeth at him".)

The reading misses out on some of the facts here – Stephen was tried in a court and refused to give up his faith in Jesus, so he was taken out of Jerusalem and stoned – that means they threw stones at him until he died.

Q: What did Stephen see? (A: The glory of God in heaven and Jesus with God the Father.)

Q: When the angels appeared to the shepherds just after He was born they sang "glory to God in the highest." Where have you heard these words? (A: In the Gloria at Mass and in a lot of Christmas carols.)

Q: Where is Jesus now? (A: In heaven, but also in our churches in the Eucharist and in fact wherever we are as His Body on earth".)

Q: When we go into Catholic churches there is a box with a candle burning near by. This is the tabernacle, and it is where the Blessed Sacrament is kept. What do we do when we see the tabernacle? (A: Genuflect and make the Sign of the Cross.)

Q: Our church buildings are like "mini-heavens." What else is in our church building that reminds us of heaven? (A: Open.)

Finish by singing a carol which includes the word "glory".

2nd Day of Christmas, Two Turtle Doves

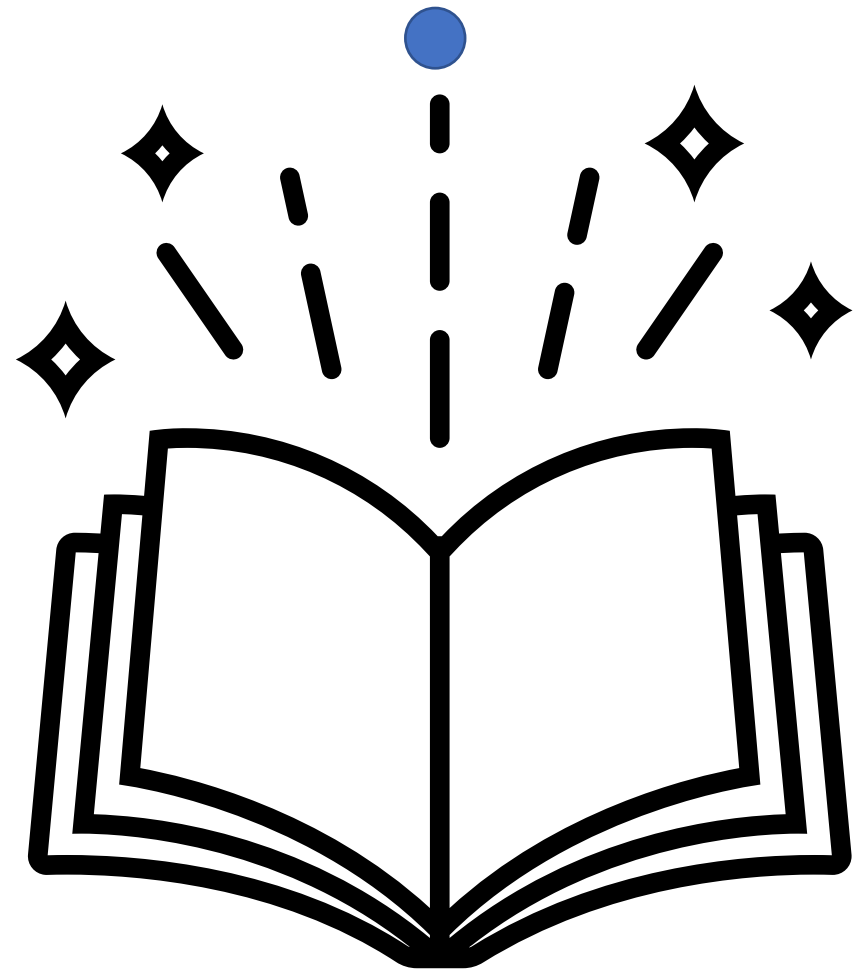
On the Second day of Christmas my true love
gave to me, Two turtle doves...

2. The Two Testaments of the Bible

Our heavenly Father Has given us a beautiful love letter!
In the Old Testament He has revealed to us that He is
God who created us and that when we sinned, He promised
to send His Son to restore us to Him. In the New
Testament that promise is realised and comes true in the
birth, teaching, Passion, death, Resurrection and
Ascension of Jesus Christ.

The Bible can be confusing and sometimes we read things
that upset us, and we wonder why God acts in such strange
ways. If you have the chance to read the Bible all the way
through, you will see that God in fact teaches parents how
to be parents. Parents sometimes must tell children off
and punish them when they are naughty, and this is what
God does with His children, the people of Israel.

In the open Bible write a sentence that you like from each
of the Testaments. Put your Old Testament quote on the
left and the New Testament quote on the right. Don't
forget the Psalms in the Old Testament, they have many
beautiful and loving lines and prayers.



**"The One same Word of God reaches through the
whole of the Bible"
(St. Augustine).**

Feast of St. John the Evangelist

Gospel

John 20:2-8

On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.'

So, Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going towards the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb.

He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on the head of Jesus, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed.

The Gospel of the Lord

R/: *Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ*

27th December, the 3rd day of Christmas

Discussion on the Gospel



- ✠ Light Your Christmas candle
- ✠ Make the Sign of the Cross
- ✠ Someone read the Gospel slowly

Today we celebrate the feast of St. John the Evangelist – the writer of the “fourth Gospel”. He does not name himself but refers to Himself as the “beloved disciple” or “the other disciple”. He was probably the youngest of all the disciples and traditionally He was the only disciple who was not martyred, living a long life, writing His Gospel much later than the other three. He alone stood at the foot of the cross with Mary, when all the other disciples ran away. His long life is seen as a reward for his faithfulness then. Today’s reading is suddenly taking us to Easter... why? Well, this is the moment that St. John finally really and truly believed that Jesus is the Christ who died and rose again. It's His moment of conversion, so to speak.

Q: What did St. Mary Magdalene say to Simon Peter and the other disciple (St. John)? (A: That Jesus’ body had been stolen....)

Q: What did St. Peter and St. John do? (A: Ran to the tomb.)

Q: What did St. John do when He arrived? (A: Saw the linen cloths lying on the ground but did not go in.)

Q: What did St. Peter do when He arrived? (A: Went into the tomb.)

Q: What happened when St. John went into the tomb? (A: He suddenly believed that Jesus had risen from the dead.)

Q: St. John believed and so did St. Peter - what did they do after Jesus went up into heaven (after the Ascension)? (A: They went around telling people about Jesus and that is how we know about Him.)

Q: Today is the third day of Christmas and we can think about the three theological virtues, faith hope and love. How did St. John display these virtues?

(A: Various, e.g. Faith; He stayed with Jesus, he believed when he went into the tomb, he write his Gospel so that we might believe... Hope; He hoped in the Resurrection, He hoped that we would love Jesus as much as He does... Love; He loved Jesus enough to stay beside Him at the foot of the cross, He was called the beloved disciple because of this.)

3rd Day of Christmas, Three French Hens

On the Third day of Christmas my true love gave
to me, Three French Hens...

3. The gift of the Three Theological Virtues

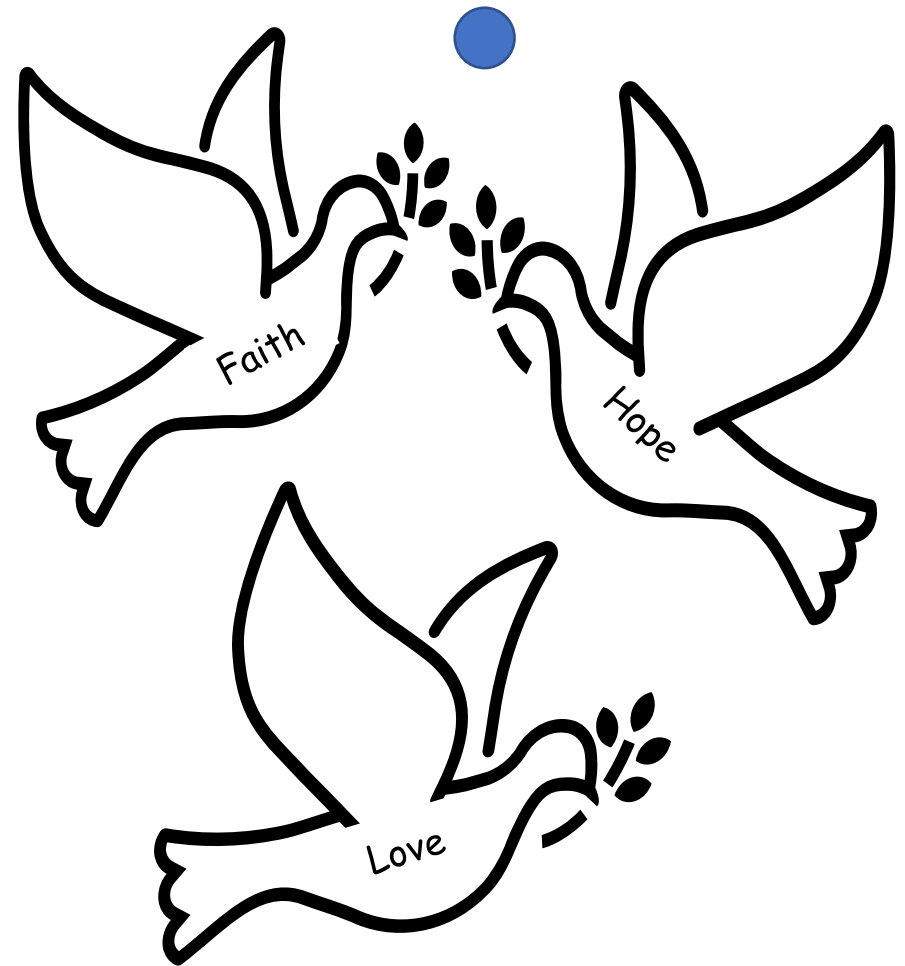
At our Baptism we are given three very special gifts to help us to grow closer to Jesus who leads us to His Father by the grace of the Holy Spirit. They are called the "theological" gifts of **faith, hope and love**. "Theological" means that they come from God. These gifts will grow stronger with practice!

Faith - This word means both **what** we believe (that Jesus Christ came to lead us to His Father) and the **act** of believing. We can grow in faith each day just by saying "Jesus I believe, help me to believe more and more."

Hope - this special gift is not about hoping that our favourite football team will win but hoping in God - hoping that we will spend Eternal Life with Him in heaven. Hope gives us courage in difficult times.

Love - this is the most important gift as God is love and all love in the world comes from Him. He created us because He loves us. Love is about wanting the best for everyone, even if we don't like them!

As you colour in the doves, ask the Holy Spirit to help you to grow in each of these virtues.



"Faith, hope and love abide... but the greatest of these is love"
(St Paul, I Corinthians 13:13).

Feast of the Massacre of the Holy Innocents

Gospel

Matthew 2:13-18

Now when the wise men had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.'

And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod.

This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

'Out of Egypt I called my son.'

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

'A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.'

The Gospel of the Lord

R/: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

28th December, 4th Day of Christmas

Discussion on the Gospel

- ✠ Light your Christmas candle
- ✠ Make the Sign of the Cross
- ✠ Someone read the Gospel slowly



Today is a hard day, especially for those who have lost young children for any reason. As parents it can be incomprehensible to understand how people can deliberately kill innocent babies, as we love our children so much. However today is a day when we as adults and older children can reflect on all the innocent babies who have been killed in the womb through abortion. With young children the discussion is on God's plan for us and that He will help us when life is challenging.

Q: What did the angel tell St. Joseph to do? (A: To take Mary and Jesus to Egypt...)

Q: Why did Joseph have to do this? (A: Because King Herod wanted to kill [do away with] Jesus.)

Q: As God the Father planned for Jesus to come and die on the Cross, was King Herod going to be able to stop God's plans? (A: No.)

Q: God has a plan for each one of us. He looked after Jesus and His family, so when we are afraid, we need to remember that He will look after us too.

What can we do when we are afraid? (A: We can ask the Holy Spirit to help and guide us. We can also ask St. Joseph to protect us as he protected Mary and baby Jesus.)

Let's now ask Mary, who trusted in the Father's plans for Jesus, to pray for us so that we can be the people God has created us to be:

Hail Mary.....



http://www.biblekids.eu/new_testament/Flight_into_Egypt/flight_into_egypt_index.html

4th Day of Christmas, Four Calling Birds

On the Fourth day of Christmas my true love
gave to me, Four Calling birds...

4. The Gift of the Four Evangelists

The four evangelists (Gospel writers) are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Matthew, Mark, and Luke's Gospels are very similar and often tell the same stories with subtle differences because they are writing for different audiences.

Each of the evangelists have been given their own symbol of a winged creature - instead of being "calling birds" they are "calling beasts":

St. Matthew: A divine man as he teaches about Jesus in His human nature and gives us His genealogy from Abraham.

St. Mark: A winged lion as his Gospel begins with the words "a voice on one crying in the desert" which sounds like the roar of a lion.

St. Luke: A winged ox as he focuses on Jesus' sacrifice in more detail, and as his Gospel begins in the temple, where sacrifices took place.

St. John: A winged eagle, as his writing leads us up into the mysteries of heaven itself.

Write the name of the evangelist under each of the pictures and colour them in.



A prayer for bedtime: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Bless the bed that I lie on.

29th December 5th Day of Christmas



Feast of St. Thomas Becket, bishop and Martyr

Collect (opening prayer)

Today, let us reflect on the collect, which is the opening prayer at Mass which the priest prays after we have said the "I Confess".

It is easy not to pay attention to these prayers, they are so quick but they are beautiful prayers and are there to help us enter into the theme of the Mass.

O God, who gave the Martyr
Saint Thomas Becket
the courage to give up his life
for the sake of justice,
grant, through his
intercession,
that, renouncing our life
for the sake of Christ in this
world,
we may find it in heaven.
Through our Lord Jesus
Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy
Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Discussion on St Thomas

- † Light your Christmas candle
- † Make the Sign of the Cross
- † Read the explanation below and then the Collect.

***St Thomas Becket** was born in London and became a close friend of King Henry II. In those days, it was almost always priests and bishops who ran the country with the kings, as they tended to be the only people who could read. St. Thomas originally studied for the priesthood to become a politician, not a religious person. He had only got as far as being ordained as a deacon (not a priest) when he was made chancellor of England (like the modern-day prime minister). However, he was eventually ordained a priest and then became the archbishop of Canterbury, which was the most important role in the country after the king. The grace (God's Holy Spirit) of the Sacrament of Ordination worked in Him, and Thomas realised that he had an important role in the Church. He realised that the King was trying to rule the Church, which he was not supposed to do. King Henry II got very angry Thomas who had to hide in a French monastery for six years. Eventually, he returned to Canterbury, but continued to defend the Church against the king. One day, King Henry was so frustrated, he said in anger "Who will rid me of this troublesome priest?" He was overheard by four knights who rode on their horses as fast as they could to Canterbury thinking that they would get a great reward if they killed Thomas. They found him praying in his cathedral and killed him there on the steps of the North Transept (crossing place) on 29 December 1170. St. Thomas was immediately acknowledged as a martyr! Later, King Henry was sorry for his careless words and did penance. He also paid for a magnificent shrine in the cathedral (which a later King Henry had destroyed during the Reformation). St Thomas Becket is remembered for his courage defending of the rights of the Church.*

Q: How did being ordained change St. Thomas Becket? (A: It made him realise that he had an important role in the Church.)

Q: Why was St. Thomas killed? (A: Because King Henry said that he wanted to get rid of him.)

Q: What were the careless words of King Henry? (A: Who will rid me of this troublesome priest?)

Q: Let's think about the careless things we say – what kind of things might we say without thinking that can hurt people? (A: Open – but talking about people behind their back, saying rude things that we don't mean.)

Q: The collect refers to "intercession". What does that mean? (A: Praying for someone.)

Let us now ask St Thomas to pray for us that we can be brave and will stand up for Jesus in front of other people.

5th Day of Christmas, Five Gold Rings

On the Fifth day of Christmas my true love gave
to me, Five Gold Rings...

5. The Gift of the first five books of the Bible

The first five books of the Bible are called the "Pentateuch." They are truly a "golden" gift as they are the foundation of our faith and also of course, of the faith of the Jews.

Genesis: God's beautiful gift of His creation and our first parents' disobedience, Noah, the call of Abraham, our Father in faith, Isaac, and Jacob and how the chosen people ended up in Egypt.

Exodus: God's wonderful gift of freedom from slavery in Egypt, the gift of the Ten Commandments and manna in the desert.

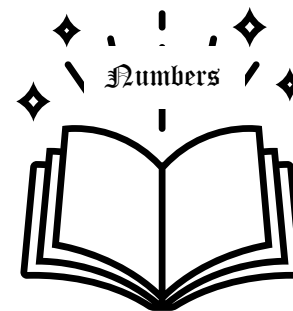
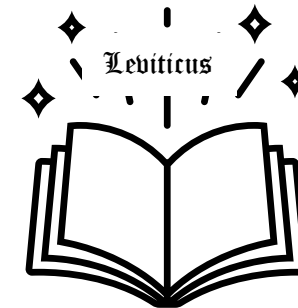
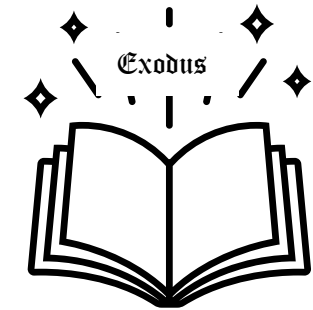
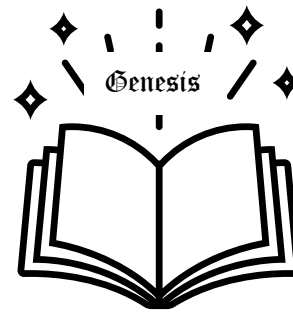
Leviticus: God's wise gift of the Law which was fulfilled in Jesus' teaching.

Numbers: God's gift of forming His people as a community, teaching them to worship Him and live together peacefully.

Deuteronomy: God's gift of preparing His people to conquer the Promised Land. In particular we can read this book as a preparation for life in our Promised Land, Heaven.

Find a sentence from each of these different five books of the Bible and write them under the pictures of the books here.

Say this prayer at the end of the day together from the book of numbers.



"The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord to make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace"
(Numbers 6:24-26).

30th December 6th Day of Christmas, Six Geese a-laying

On the Sixth day of Christmas my true love gave
to me, Six Geese a-laying...

6. The Gift of the Six Days of Creation

Today we focus on the truly wonderful gift of creation. Eggs are a sign of the gift of life which comes from God. The creation story shows us that all creation comes from God, whether it took 6 days or millions of years, and we are reminded that it needs looking after! God gives us each of these things by saying "let there be..."

Day 1: God gives us light; He separated light from darkness and called it day and night; and it was good.

Day 2: God gives us heaven above the earth, and it was good.

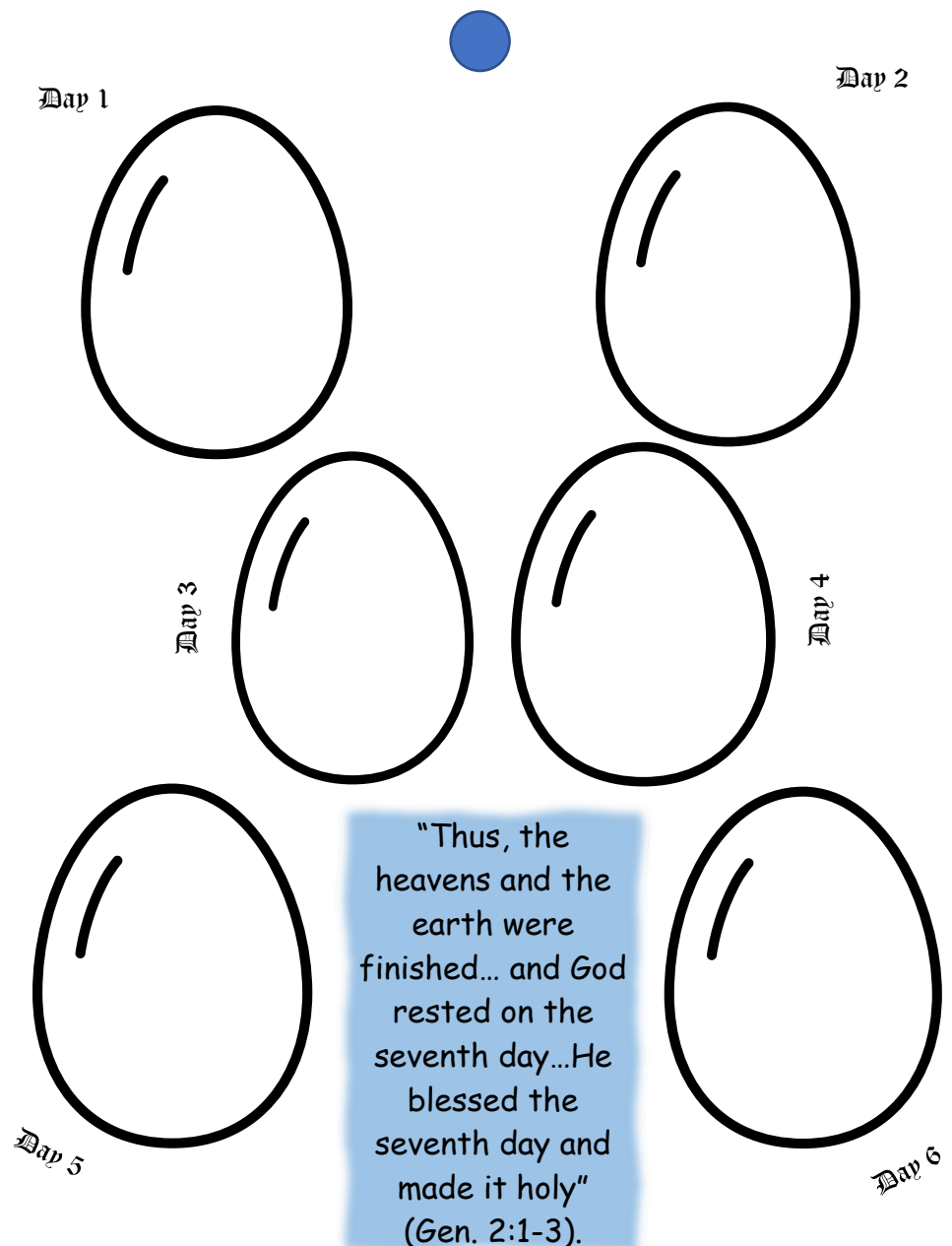
Day 3: God gives us the earth and the seas. On the earth God caused the plants and trees to grow and bear fruit; and it was good.

Day 4: God gives us the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens; and it was good.

Day 5: God gives all the creatures in the seas, in the air and on the land; and it was good.

Day 6: God said, "Let us make man in our image... so God created man... male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:26-27). God has given us the precious gift of life. And it was very good.

Draw a picture to reflect each of the days, in each of the eggs.



31st December; 7th Day of Christmas, Seven Swans-a- swimming

On the Seventh day of Christmas my true love gave to me, Seven Swans-a-swimming...

7. The Gift of the Seven Sacraments

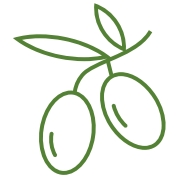
The sacraments are the most precious gifts of Our Lord Jesus Christ we have. Jesus is truly present in them, working among us as He did when He was on earth with His disciples. Sacraments each have signs and words. Let's think about the signs here.

1. **Baptism:** We are washed clean of original sin **in water** and are joined to God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and His Church.
2. **Confirmation:** The gifts of the Holy Spirit which we receive by **anointing with oil, (made from olives)**, strengthen us to go out and tell other people about Jesus.
3. **Eucharist:** The **bread and wine** become Jesus' Body and Blood here for us at Mass.
4. **Confession:** The priest **raises his hand** and absolves us (forgives us) our sins on Jesus' behalf.
5. **Sacrament of the sick:** Through an **anointing with oil**, Jesus strengthens the sick and helps them to be strong in their illness.
6. **Marriage:** The spouses **freely agree to be married rings are exchanged** and Jesus unites them to one another as sign of His love for His Church.
7. **Ordination:** The Bishop **anoints the hands with oil** and gives the man the power to celebrate Holy Mass and hear confessions.

Can you match the Sacrament with the sign? One is done for you.



Baptism



Confirmation



Eucharist



Confession



Sacrament of the sick



Marriage



Holy Orders



O my God, because you are so good, I am very sorry that I have sinned against you, and by the help of your grace, I will not sin again.

1st January the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God



Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God

Gospel **Luke 2:16-21**

At that time: the shepherds went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

The Gospel of the Lord,

R/: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Discussion on Mary, Mother of God.

- ✠ Light your Christmas candle
- ✠ Make the Sign of the Cross
- ✠ Read the explanation below and then read the Gospel from today's Mass.

Today's is a beautiful celebration of the Church. In the middle of the 5th century (431 AD) there were people who thought that Jesus was the greatest of all created people but was not God. However, after much prayer and reflection, guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church recognised that Jesus is truly God and truly man and these two natures cannot be separated. The tiny baby in the manger in Bethlehem was truly God. Therefore, Mary is not just the mother of Jesus the man but is the mother of Jesus who is fully God.

By recognising Mary as the Mother of God, the Church is honouring her Divine (Godly) Son as well as honouring Mary. We do not worship Mary – only God can be worshipped. That is why in traditional paintings of the nativity, Mary, Joseph, and the visitors are seen to be worshipping the Christ-child.

Because Jesus is truly man as well as truly God, it means that He is completely human like us, (in all ways except for sin). Because Jesus is both man and God, He unites (joins) humanity to God. Therefore, He can unite us to His Father. These mysteries of the faith are not there to “be solved” but like Mary, who pondered on these things, we too are invited to do just that.

Q: Who came to visit the Holy Family? (A: The shepherds.)

Q: What did Mary do? (A: She treasured these things and pondered them in her heart.)

Q: What does “ponder” mean? (A: To think about.)

Q: So Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is both God and man at the same time, had to think about these things and work them out. It's no wonder that we can be puzzled sometimes. But we can do some pondering too. Today is the 8th day of Christmas and that reminds us of the 8 Beatitudes. Let's ponder on how the Beatitudes describe Jesus who is fully God and fully man. Colour in the words on the next page from the Beatitudes that describe Jesus. As you do, think about times in the Gospels where we read about Jesus being poor, persecuted, etc.

Finish by praying the “Hail Mary” where we address her as “Mother of God”

8th Day of Christmas; Eight Maids-a- milking

On the Eighth day of Christmas my true love gave
to me, Eight Maids-a-milking...

8. The Gift of the Eight Beatitudes

The Beatitudes (Mt. 5: 3-11) can be described as a "pen-portrait" of Jesus. Jesus is poor, He mourns with those who mourn, He is meek, merciful... and so on. The Beatitudes also describe His mother, Mary, who has certainly inherited a place in heaven beside her Son as a reward for her faith and suffering in her life on earth.

1. Blessed are the poor in Spirit
For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven
2. Blessed are those who mourn
For they will be comforted
3. Blessed are the meek
They shall inherit the earth
4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
They shall be satisfied
5. Blessed are the merciful
They will obtain (receive) mercy themselves
6. Blessed are the pure in heart
They shall see God
7. Blessed are the peacemakers
They shall be called sons and daughters of God
8. Blessed are those who are persecuted for doing the right thing
The Kingdom of Heaven shall be theirs

***See if you can learn these off by heart." Or may be split it up
and learn one line each day.***

The Beatitudes perfectly describe Jesus. Colour in these words.

Poor

Meek

Peacemaker

Works for justice

Pure in heart

Mourns/cries

Merciful

Persecuted



Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 22(23)

The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The LORD is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me;
he revives my soul.

He guides me along the right path,
for the sake of his name.
Though I should walk in the valley of
the shadow of death,
no evil would I fear, for you are with
me.
Your crook and your staff will give me
comfort.

You have prepared a table before me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing.

Surely goodness and mercy shall
follow me
all the days of my life.
In the LORD's own house shall I dwell
for length of days unending.

The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

2nd January, 9th Day of Christmas

Discussion on the reading

- ✠ Light your Christmas candle
- ✠ Make the Sign of the Cross
- ✠ Someone read the Psalm slowly, all join in with the antiphon



St. Basil the Great (330 - 379) was born into a Christian family and early on realised that Jesus was calling him to something special. At first, he was a hermit (lived alone away from people) but God had other plans for him. He was ordained bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, his home-town, and set out a rule for monks which is the basis for many monks in the Eastern rites of the Church. He argued against the heresy that said that Jesus was not God (Arianism).

St Gregory Nazianzen (330 - 389) came from Nazianzus and followed his friend Basil into the desert at first. However, he too was ordained a bishop, and like Basil was also a great theologian and taught that each person of the Holy Trinity is in Himself entirely God, the Father is fully God, the Son is fully God and the Holy Spirit is fully God.

The reading for today is the psalm at Mass and it reflects that bishops (such as these saints) are shepherds on earth, but that Jesus is the Good Shepherd who leads us to still waters – heaven.

Q: Where does the Good Shepherd lead us? (A: Green pastures, restful waters, the right path.)

Q: Who does the Good Shepherd represent? (A: Jesus.)

Q: What else does the Good Shepherd do? (A: Open – from the psalm.)

Q: What is a banquet? (A: A feast, party food.)

Q: What is the banquet that Jesus has prepared for us? (A: Eucharist/Holy Communion/heaven.)

Q: What is the Lord's own house that I shall dwell in for ever? (A: Heaven.)

Q: Today is the 9th day of Christmas and we think about the fruits of the Spirit that we have been given. They are listed below. Where does fruit grow? (A: On trees.)

Q: Today's saints were fruitful because they stayed close to Jesus and He was able to feed them and lead them along the right path. How can we stay close to Jesus and be fruitful? (A: Open.)

2nd January; 9th Day of Christmas, Nine Ladies Dancing

On the Ninth day of Christmas my true love gave
to me, Nine Ladies Dancing...

9. The Gift of Nine Fruits of the Spirit

The gifts of the Holy Spirit makes us dance for joy! When we receive the gifts and use them in our lives, we will bear **fruit**. The fruit of a tree is the whole reason that it grows because in the fruit there is the seed of new life. Only a tree that is growing in the right place and that has been "fed" correctly will grow and produce fruit.

So, when we feed on Christ by reading the Bible, and listening to our teachers, when we come to Mass and pray, and when we do as we are told, we are like fruit trees growing in the right place, and we will have good fruit.

These are the fruits of the Spirit as listed by St Paul in Galatians 5:22:

Patience

Self-control

Love

Peace

Faithfulness

Kindness

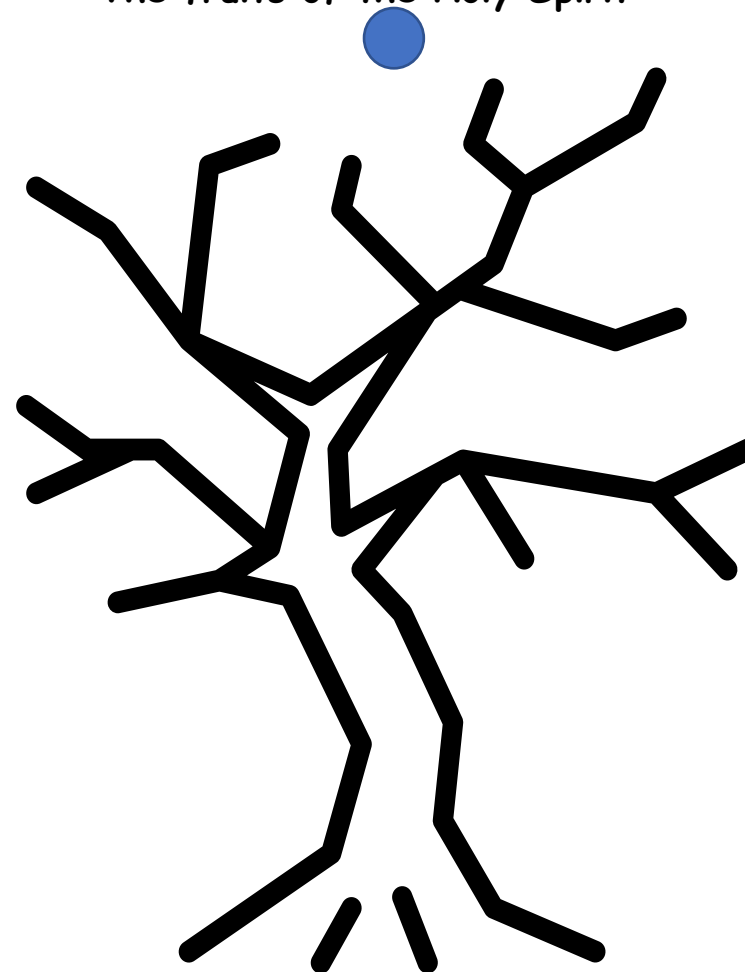
Gentleness

Generosity

Joy

Draw different fruits on this tree and write or stick the different labels on them. You don't have to stick to the same fruit, mix them up, draw apples, bananas, oranges etc, Unlike trees, we all bear different fruits at different times!

The fruits of the Holy Spirit



Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and thou shall renew the face of the earth.

3rd January; St Geneviève (c.420 - c.510) Patron saint of Paris

Geneviève was born near Paris. At that time France was not called France, but Gaul. In Britain at that time a man called Pelagius was teaching that Jesus did not die to save us from our sins, but that we have to earn our way into heaven. This is completely wrong, and this teaching is now called the "Pelagian Heresy". However, at first a lot of people thought it was good; they thought that a being strict Christian could earn heaven. (Sts.) Germanus and Lupus were on their way to Britain to tell people that Pelagius was wrong and stopped near Geneviève's home and she listened to them. She realised that Jesus was asking her to do something special for the people of Paris, but that she needed to pray a lot first.

At first, she lived at home but when her parents died, she moved into Paris. In 451, after the Romans left Gaul, Gaul was suffering attacks from Attila the Hun and the people of Paris were terrified of this new force of invaders. The Parisians got ready to run away, but Geneviève remembered the teaching of Germanus and Lupus. Running away was giving in, staying and praying, loving one another by God's grace and obeying the commandments would help them to trust in God's help.

Amazingly, Attila did not attack Paris but changed direction. However, shortly afterwards, Paris was laid siege by Mérovée and his successors, Childeric and Clovis. Geneviève's faith and loving respect of all people influenced the attackers, and they did not massacre (kill) the inhabitants of Paris. Clovis eventually became the first King of a united France and was baptised into the Catholic Church. Geneviève asked him to build a church dedicated to Sts. Peter and Paul. Although both Clovis and she died before it was completed, her body was buried in that church and it quickly became a shrine to St. Geneviève. That church had a turbulent history, reflecting the history of France but now her shrine is in the nearby church of Saint Etienne du Mont.

St. Geneviève shows us that our salvation does not depend upon working hard, but on loving one another as Jesus loves us. The Ten Commandments form the structure of a life of faith, but we can only obey them by the grace of God, not by our human strength alone.

We receive grace in all the sacraments - grace is a kind of power or ability to live as Jesus wants us to.

How is God's grace going to help you today?

God's

Riches

At

Christ's

Expense

3rd January; 10th Day of Christmas, Ten Lords-a-leaping

On the Tenth Day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, Ten Lords-a-leaping...

10. The Gift of the Ten Commandments

The 10 Lords leap for joy! The authors of the Old Testament were proud to have been given the Ten Commandments and the Law (see Deuteronomy 4:8), and rightly so. Parents we know that children who have clear boundaries are happier and secure. So, the Ten Commandments gives us boundaries in our lives. To see how, read the Ten Commandments as they are written, and then read them as though they said the opposite, and see the picture you create! (e.g. no 3 "Don't keep holy the Sabbath day", and no 7 "You shall steal".)

1. I am the Lord your God, and you shall have no other gods before me
2. You shall not take the name of your Lord God in vain
3. Remember to keep the Lord's Day holy
4. Honour your father and your mother
5. You shall not kill
6. You shall not commit adultery
7. You shall not steal
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour
9. You shall not cover your neighbour's wife
10. You shall not covet your neighbour's goods

Put the correct number against these simplified versions of the Ten Commandments. The first one is done.

Killing people is wrong

5

Keep Sunday special by praying and going to Church

Be happy with what you have and don't be jealous of what other people have

I am the only God there is so don't worship anything else

Keep your marriage promises

Do not take anything that is not yours without asking

Don't tell lies about other people

Respect and obey Mum and Dad

Don't swear using God's name

Don't try to break up other people's friendships and relationships

"And what great nation is there that has such rules and commands as the Law that we have?" (Deut. 4:8).

4th January; 11th Day of Christmas, Eleven Pipers Piping

On the Eleventh Day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, Eleven pipers piping...

11. The Gift of the Eleven Faithful Apostles

How wonderful that when Jesus died on the Cross, after Judas betrayed Him, the other Apostles stayed faithful, even though it seemed as if Jesus' mission had been a disaster! We will never truly know what went on in Judas' heart when he betrayed Jesus, but let's focus on those who carried on and in due time piped the tunes that Jesus had spoken - that is, went out and about teaching what they had heard from Jesus.

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the other Apostles chose a replacement for Judas, (Matthias) but in those weeks before then, the 11 remaining Apostles supported and encouraged each other at a really stressful time (See Acts 1:12-26).

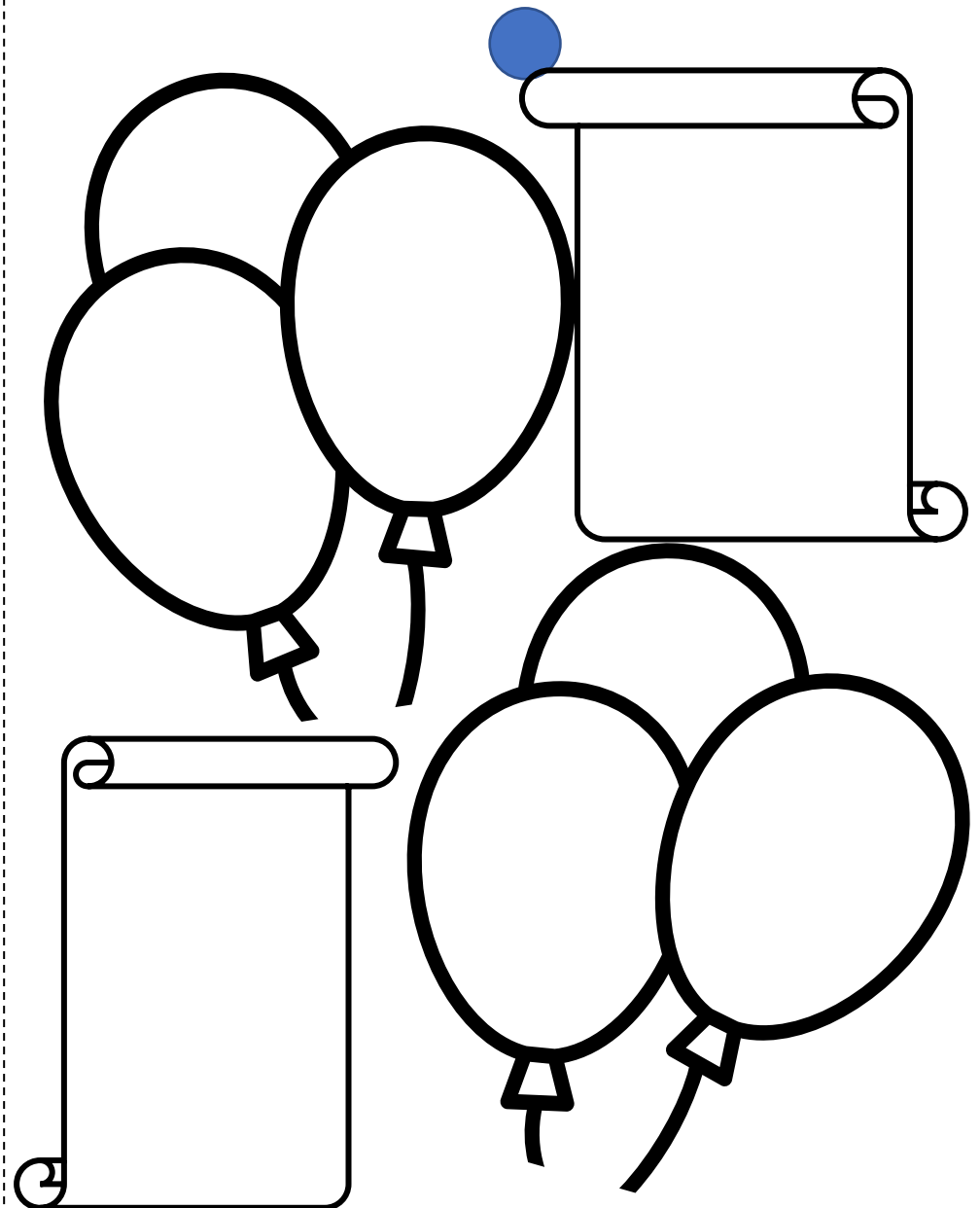
What could they have said to each other?

How could they have encouraged each other?

On the opposite page, write some encouraging words in the balloons which you could say to anyone who is upset, worried or frightened.

Then write your own prayer for someone who is unhappy in the scrolls.

"When they returned from Jerusalem... they went into the upper room... together with Mary... and devoted themselves to prayer" (Acts 1:12-14).



5th January; 12th Day of Christmas, Twelve Drummers Drumming

On the Twelfth Day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, Twelve Drummers Drumming...

12. The Gift of the Twelve articles of faith

God's gift of faith to us is truly life-saving. The faith we hold in Him is the path we need to take to be able to spend Eternal Life with Him in heaven. The Apostles' Creed proclaims these 12 articles, and the more we say this, the more the saving facts of Eternal Life are "drummed" into our minds.

Article 1: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

Article 2: And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

Article 3: Who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

Article 4: He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

Article 5: He descended into hell. The third day he arose again from the dead. (This is not the hell of the damned, but the place of the dead who were waiting for Jesus to come and rescue them and take them into heaven with Him.)

Article 6: He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

Article 7: He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Article 8: I believe in the Holy Spirit,

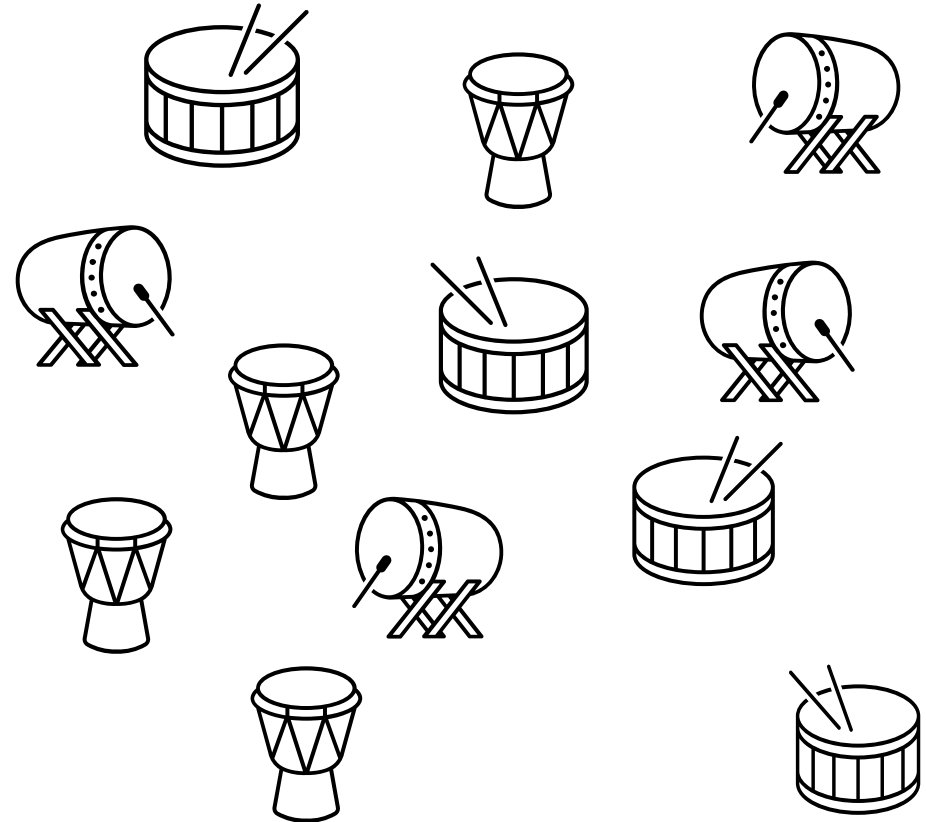
Article 9: The Holy catholic Church, the Communion of Saints,

Article 10: The forgiveness of sins,

Article 11: The resurrection of the body,

Article 12: And in life everlasting. Amen

Colour in one drum for each of the 12 articles that you can remember by heart.



Whoever says "I believe" pledges themselves to what WE believe ... faith needs a common language which unites us all. (From the Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph 185).

The Solemnity of the Epiphany Years A, B & C



Solemnity of Epiphany

Gospel

Matthew 2:1-12

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?’

For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.’ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he enquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

“And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.” ’

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared.

And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.’

After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. .

The Gospel of the Lord, R/: **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

Discussion on the Gospel

✠ Light your Christmas candle and Make the Sign of the Cross. *Epiphany is about when the infant Christ was shown to the world – Jesus not only for the Jews, the chosen people, but for us all, and today, we celebrate that wonderful aspect of our faith – no-one is excluded.*

There is an art reflection following these notes to do as well/or instead of these questions.

Q: How many kings are mentioned in this story? (A: Two – King Herod and the “Infant King” [Jesus]. Note, we do not know how many “wise men” there were – only three gifts are mentioned.)

Q: Why was King Herod worried when the wise men arrived? (A: He thought that Jesus was going to replace him as king.)

Q: What led the wise men to the house where Jesus was? (A: A star.)

Q: What did the wise men do when they entered the house where Jesus was?? (A: They fell to their knees and did Him homage [worshipped Jesus].)

Q: What did the wise men give to Jesus? (A: Gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.)

Q: When do we fall on our knees and worship Jesus? (A: At Mass when the priest lifts up the Host during the consecration.)

Q: What gifts can we give to Jesus? (A: Open – our love/kindness/obedience....)

Q: When we go into a Catholic church, we can look for the sanctuary lamp, which is a light burning to show that Jesus is present in the tabernacle as the consecrated hosts. Learn this prayer by heart so that you can say it quietly next time you go into a church.

**O Sacrament most Holy, O Sacrament Divine,
All praise and all thanksgiving, Be every moment Thine.**

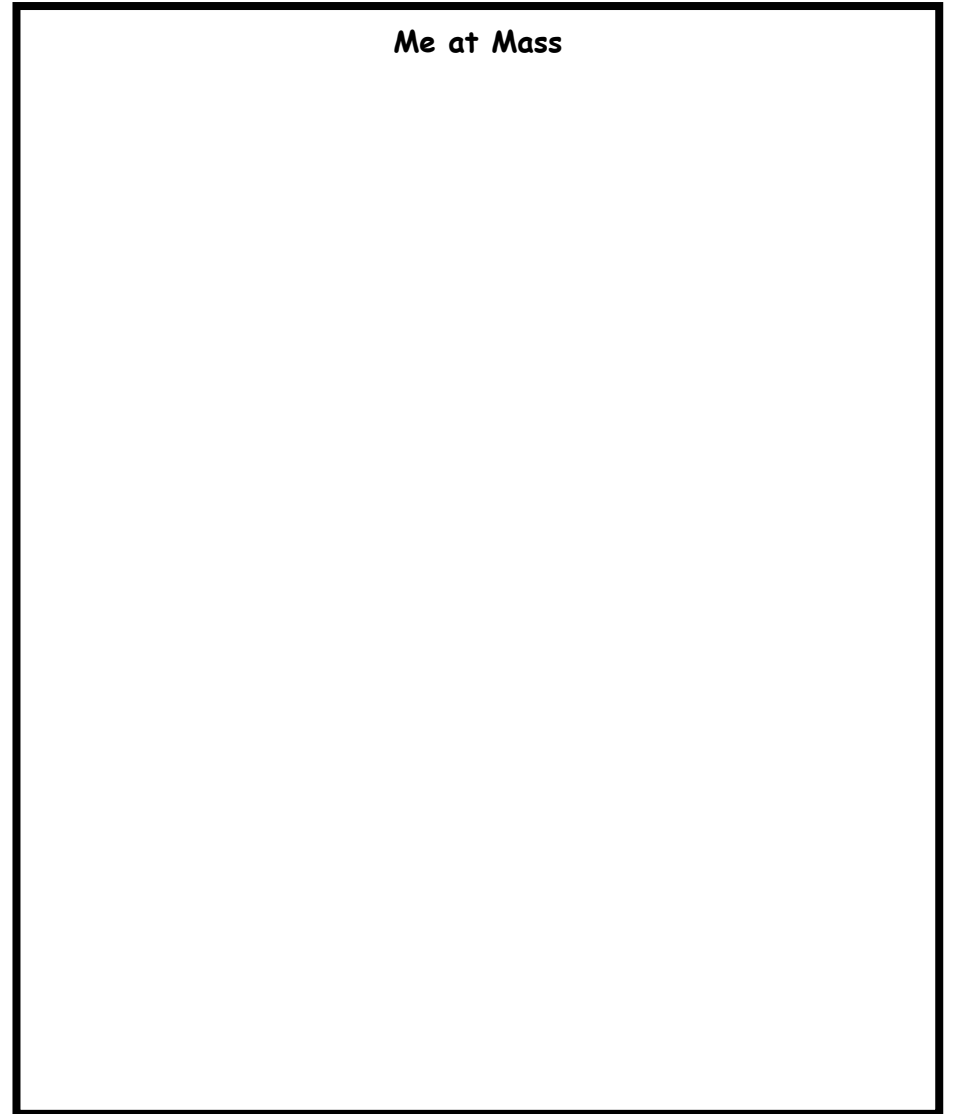
Either colour in this picture of the wise men worshipping Jesus or draw yourself at Mass kneeling during the consecration when the priest lifts up the host and chalice.

The wise men worship Jesus



<http://www.getcoloringpages.com/coloring/120403>

Me at Mass



Refection for Epiphany

We can use art to think about the meaning of this great feast, which is at the end of the 12 days of Christmas. On the next page is a picture by Gentile Da Fabriano. This is an altar piece, painted to go behind the altar. When this was painted, altars were against the East wall of the church, and the priest faced East so was facing the same way as everyone else. (Church Tradition is that when Jesus comes again, He will come from the East, so Mass was always said with everyone, not just the congregation, facing East, looking for Christ to come again.) Let's think about this picture helps us to understand the Eucharist (Holy Communion).

Here are some discussion points about this picture which will help you to understand the mystery of who Jesus is.

- **Before we look at the three "kings" let's just look at the light in this picture. Half close your eyes and squint at the picture. List all the bright spots you can see;** (A: The gold, especially the star above Joseph's head and the light coming down from it to baby Jesus.)
- **Why do you think that this is the brightest part of the picture?** (A: Because Jesus is the light of the world and this picture reminds us of that.)
- **The three "kings" or "Wise men" are of different ages; what is the youngest one doing?** (A: He's standing up, holding out his gift, and he's still wearing his crown.)
- **What is the middle one doing?** (A: He's started to remove his crown, started to bow, and has started to offer his gift.)
- **What is the oldest one doing?** (A: He's on the ground kneeling and kissing Baby Jesus' feet.)
- **What has happened to the oldest one's crown and beautiful robe?** (A: They are on the ground.)
- **What might this mean?** (A: That the oldest wise man considers that worshiping Jesus is more important than any worldly riches.)
- **When do we get on our knees and worship Jesus?** (A: At Mass.)
- **Look how the oldest wise man is taking Jesus' flesh to His lips. When do we take Jesus's flesh to our lips?** (A: When we receive Him in Holy Communion.)

The wise men followed the star and went on a long journey to find Jesus - think about how as a family you can search for Jesus this coming year.

With gratitude to Dr Caroline Farey for these suggested questions ad for those on the Baptism of Jesus below.



Baptism of the Lord Year A

Gospel

Matthew 3:13-17

At that time:

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John,
to be baptised by him.

John would have prevented him,
saying, 'I need to be baptised by you,
and do you come to me?'

But Jesus answered him,
'Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to
fulfil all righteousness.'

Then he consented.

And when Jesus was baptised,
immediately he went up from the water,
and behold, the heavens were opened to
him,
and he saw the Spirit of God descending
like a dove and coming to rest on him;
and behold, a voice from heaven said,
'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well
pleased.'

The Gospel of the Lord, R/: **Praise to you Lord
Jesus Christ.**

Baptism of the Lord Year B

Gospel

Mark 1:7-11

At that time:

John preached, saying, 'After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose
sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptised by John in the
Jordan.

And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open
and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

And a voice came from heaven,
'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'

The Gospel of the Lord, R/: **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

Baptism of the Lord Year C

Gospel

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

At that time:

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts
concerning John, whether he might be the Christ,

John answered them all, saying,

'I baptise you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming,
the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.
He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'

Now when all the people were baptised by John the Baptist and when Jesus also had been
baptised and was praying, the heavens were opened,
and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove;
and a voice came from heaven,

'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'

The Gospel of the Lord, R/: **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord Years A, B & C



Liturgy of the word on the Gospel

The Gospels for all three years reflect the theme of each year, Matthew for Year A, Mark. For Year B etc. Whilst they all differ slightly, the questions below are suitable for each of the three years.

✠ Light a candle

✠ A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew/Mark/Luke

R/: Glory to you O Lord

Q: What happened when Jesus came up out of the water? (A: The Holy Spirit who looked like a dove appeared.)

Q: What was the Father heard to say from heaven? (A: This is my Son....)

Q: When we are baptised, the priest says “N. I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. When do we used these words? (A: When we make the Sign of the Cross.)

Q: What happens to a person when they are baptised? (A: They are joined to Jesus and to the Church. Their sins are wiped away and they are filled with the Holy Spirit who gives all the grace that is needed to love Jesus. They are also given special gifts (virtues) of faith hope and love and above all, they are given the Holy Spirit so that they can live as Jesus wants them to live.)

Q: What do you think God the Father says to us when we are baptised? (A: You are my son/daughter, my favour rests on you (which means, I love you and have chosen you to be a child of mine).

Let us make the Sign of the Cross very slowly and say thank you to God for the gift of Baptism.

If you can have a bowl of holy water, invite the children to dip their finger into it and slowly make the Sign of the Cross with the holy water.

On the next page is a copy of the painting by the dominican, Fra Angelico, of the Baptism of Christ. As you go through the notes, colour in the grey picture so that it matches the one in colour.

Baptism of Christ, Fra Angelico

- † **Note that Jesus is already very white. This is to remind us of something white that the priest holds up at Mass. What?** (A: The Sacred Host which is Jesus, that those who have made their First Holy Communion will receive) Draw the outline of Jesus more clearly.
- † **Note that in Jesus' halo we can see a part of a cross, which is red. Why is there a cross in His halo?** (A: To show that He came to die on the Cross). Colour in the lines of the cross red.
- † **John the Baptist is reaching up to pour the water over Jesus' head. What does this tell us about John the Baptist?** (A: That he was shorter. John the Baptist said that Jesus must grow greater and he smaller. John the Baptist meant that Jesus' importance must grow greater, but artists tend to show this by physical size). **What colour is he wearing?** (A: Red, which is the colour of Christ's passion and a sign of humility). **Why do you think that John the Baptist is wearing red?** (A: because he was a martyr (he died for Christ) and because he was humble - he recognised that Jesus is more important than he is.) **Colour in John the Baptist.**
- † **Often bare rocks are used in Sacred Art to show sin. Why do you think that Fra Angelico has painted the scenery so bare and rocky?** (A: To show that Jesus came to save the world from sin). **Colour in the rocks.**
- † **The Holy Spirit is coming from a hole in the sky formed by the clouds. What line in the Gospel passage is this depicting/showing?** (A: The heavens were opened) **Colour in the sky and the clouds.**
- † **There is no image of the Father because the Father is Spirit (He is not an old man sitting on a cloud). The clouds in a circle are a bit like a mouth. What does the Father say?** (A: This is my Son....)
- † **The water is curving around from just underneath the dove (the Holy Spirit). Why do you think that Fra Angelico has painted it this way?** (A: Because the water is a symbol of the Holy Spirit and it's also a symbol of life. All life comes from the Father). **Colour in the water.**
- † **In the front are two people on the right. They are St. Dominic and St. Catherine of Siena, who were dominicans. Fra Angelico was a dominican and he painted this picture to go on the wall of a cell for the dominicans in Florence. He has included them to show that we too need to keep looking at Jesus. Colour in these people.**

✠ In the front left are two figures which are normally understood as angels, holding Jesus' clothes. One holds a dark garment and one a light garment. When this picture was painted it was normal for the person who was baptised to change their clothes after Baptism, so instead of wearing white at the beginning, a baby (or child, or adult) would wear something dark and then after Baptism would take it off and put on something white. Today, the priest usually wraps a white shawl over the newly baptised person. Can you find out what happened when you were baptised? **Colour in the angels holding the garments.**

