

Liturgy of the Word for Children

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Cycle B

Please Note: All scripture readings must be read from the Children's Lectionary

Opening Prayer:

Loving God,
when your angel came to visit Mary,
it must have been a great and wonderful surprise for her.
It was an even more wonderful surprise for the world.
Thank you for the miraculous way
that you always watch over your people.
We know our guardian angels watch over us today,
but we don't always remember that.
Help us to recognize our angels' protection
and help in our lives every day. Amen

First Reading: II Samuel 7:8-16

God said to King David, I am the one who found you while you were taking care of your sheep in the pasture. I called you to be a leader of my people. I have been with you wherever you went. I have destroyed all your enemies. I will make you famous like the great people of the earth. I will build a house for you, and I will be with you and your family forever. I will give my people a special place to live in peace, without fear. And when you die, I will make a member of your family a great king. He will be like a son to me, and I will never take my love away from him. I will make you family strong, and your kingdom will last forever.

Gospel Reading: Luke 1:26-38

(This reading is to be used for personal study. It should not be used in liturgy.)

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"
The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."

Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Mary's Story: Gospel Reflection

This is the story of MARY, the beautiful lady from Nazareth who talked to an angel named Gabriel, and on the quietest of quiet nights brought God's Word to our world. And the angel called her BLESSED, for she'd been chosen by God in heaven, to give birth to Jesus, the Son.

And Jesus called her MOTHER, for she was his mother in every way and gave him lots of love. She held his hand when he learned to walk and kissed his bruises when he fell down. And you can call her OUR LADY for Jesus asked her to watch over you, to always be your special help.

Jesus knows how well she understands about skinned knees and broken toys and temper tantrums when you are tired and the loneliness of being small in a world that is very, very big!

A BLESSED MOTHER IN HEAVEN!

A woman who talked to an angel, who knows all about being a child, who hears each prayer you pray to her son, who helps you be the best Christian of all, was given to YOU by Jesus himself!

An Angel's Visit: Gospel Reflection

Mary had worked hard all day helping her mother in the kitchen. She knelt by her bed to say her evening prayers. Suddenly, the room was filled with light. Mary looked up and saw an angel of God in front of her.

"Greetings, favored one!" the angel said. "The Lord is with you."
Mary did not understand. The angel called her "favored one." But she was just a simple girl from a small town. Too shaky to get up, Mary stayed on her knees and waited to hear what the angel would say next.

"Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel said. "You have found favor with God. You are going to have a baby boy, and you will name him Jesus. He will rule over God's people forever."

Mary stood up and went to the window, gazing at the star-filled heavens and thinking about God. "How can this be?" she asked. "Joseph and I are not even married yet."

"The Holy Spirit will come to you," the angel explained. "Your baby will be God's own Son."

Mary thought about that. "I want to serve God," she said. "Let it happen just as you say." It must have been exciting for Mary to see an angel in her house. But she knew that a messenger from heaven was a "good news" sign. And when Mary said yes to the angel, she made Christmas come true for the world forever.

The Angel and Mary: Meditation

Read the following meditation to your class:

Now, children, we are going to take a journey with our minds. To begin this journey, get in a comfortable position, and softly lay your head down. Now gently close your eyes. With your eyes closed, we are now ready to begin our trip.

I want you to imagine yourself in a great hall. The hall extends as far as your eye can see. The walls of the hall are made of glass that glow with a warm light and the floor is very soft. It almost feels like you are standing on clouds. This is the Hall of Angels. It is the place where the angels gather to carry God's special messages to earth.

The angel Gabriel enters the hall, notices you, and walks over to where you are standing. Gabriel is carrying a small glass box. Powerful light shines out from all sides of the box. The angel Gabriel tells you that you are to accompany him to the Virgin Mary of Nazareth to tell her the great news that she is going to be the mother of Jesus. Gabriel hands you the box of light and asks you to carry it to earth. You feel so proud to be helping in this great task.

You and Gabriel are whisked to earth in the blink of an eye. You appear in the home of the Virgin Mary. Gabriel announces the good news to Mary that she is to be the mother of Jesus. Gabriel then asks you to open the box. You raise the top of the glass box and immediately the room is filled with light more powerful than the sun. As you look up at Mary, you see that the light is pouring forth from her skin, her hands, her head, her face -- her whole body. It is like she has become a beam of sunshine. Take time to watch the beauty of this magic moment.

Now it is time for Gabriel to leave Mary and return to heaven. Gabriel and you have done the job of announcing to Mary that she is to be the Mother of Jesus. You are happy knowing that soon it will be Christmas day and with Mary you will celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Baby King.

Now it is time for you to return to this room and this place.

When you are ready, slowly open your eyes, gently lift your head, and slowly stretch your arms.

Saying NO to Christmas!: Story

"Will I ever be glad when the Christmas crazies are over with!" screeched Wilma, as she made her way into the front door of her home. She kicked off her shoes, dropped the bags she was carrying, and sagged into the overstuffed chair. "All this hullabaloo; it gets worse every year. I couldn't get anywhere near the nursery to get my potting soil. The place is a madhouse with all those people buying dead trees! You wouldn't catch me putting a tree in the middle of the house to shed needles all over the place."

"But did you buy Christmas presents?" asked her daughter, looking at the bags Wilma had dropped to the floor.

"No presents, no tree -- no Christmas! We're cancelling Christmas in this house. It's nothing but an excuse for retailers to rake in lots of money. Well, they won't get ours."

With a plaintive note in her voice, Jennifer asked, "So what's in the bags, Mom?" But she walked away, feeling sad and mad and totally confused, before Wilma could answer.

As the days wore on, Jennifer became more and more distant. Her friends were all caught up in the excitement of preparing for Christmas -- the day her mother had "cancelled" -- and she was too upset to even talk about it.

On Christmas Eve, Jennifer was walking past the church and saw some of her friends coming. She ducked inside, to avoid running into them. A soft light glowed over the Nativity scene. Jennifer thought about how the Baby Jesus would be carefully carried into the church and laid in the empty manger that very night. She knelt and prayed.

"Mother of God, my mother has said NO to Christmas. I'm so sad. I just don't know what to do."

A calmness settled over Jennifer. She almost thought she saw Mary smile at her, and she almost thought she heard Mary saying, "Christmas is God's gift to you."

Then she remembered something her kindergarten teacher had said when she was a little girl: "Baby Jesus is God's way of saying, 'I love you and I want you to always be happy.'"

Nobody could cancel her Christmas present from God! Jennifer almost skipped out of church. Christmas would come, after all! Christmas would always come!

Prayers of the Faithful: Allow a few moments for the children to offer prayers aloud for their special intentions. Ask them to end with "Let us pray to the Lord". All respond, "Lord, Hear our Prayer".

Apostle's Creed: You may end the Liturgy of the Word by reciting the Creed as a group if there is time.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

God's love is faithful! Mary will give birth to a son. Holy is his name!

Our first reading focuses on the promise made to David: a member of his family would be a great king, whose kingdom would last forever. This reading is filled with the fidelity of God: "I called you. . . I have always been with you. . . I promise to be with you forever. . . he will be like a son to me. . . I will never take my love away from him."

That promise is fulfilled in the Annunciation: By the power of the Spirit, Mary will give birth to a child, and "he will be called the Son of God . . . and he will be the ruler of the family of David."

In both of these readings we see the power of God at work in human beings—God's faithful love made real in history.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

Advent is a season of hope: hope in the fulfillment of God's promise made long ago, hope in a better world because Jesus was born, hope in eternal life when Jesus comes in glory. All of the readings during Advent have given us hope. Help the children see that God's promises never fail, that God loves us and is always faithful.

The fourth Sunday of Advent, in all three cycles, focuses on the relationship between the creative power of the Holy Spirit and the human agent, Mary, in the role of salvation. Today is a day for reflecting with the children on the role of Mary. Help the children see Mary as a human person, a woman who lived an ordinary life. If we create an image of Mary which gives the impression that she is somehow different from the rest of humanity, we strip her "fiat," her freely-given response to God in faith, of its true meaning. We also deny ourselves and the children the model for growing in the reality that we, like Mary, are called to total faith in God and that, as human beings, like Mary, we can do that. Help the children understand that, like Mary, we can bring Christ to others. Help them see and admire in Mary her active, free and obedient response to God. It is in this way that the children will see in Mary a model that they can not only look up to, but can indeed imitate. Help them see that in doing this we are also truly the "servant of the Lord," and that when we say "let it be done to me as you have said," we also make Christ present in our world.

You might make the Annunciation real by asking the children questions such as:

- Where did Mary live?
- Who was she engaged to?
- How did the angel Gabriel greet Mary?
- Why was Mary confused?
- What did Gabriel tell Mary?
- Why was Mary's answer to the angel so special?

Help the children see that Mary said "yes" even though she didn't understand everything God was asking through the angel.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Thought for the day

God's promised kingdom, announced both to King David in ancient times and to Mary by the angel Gabriel, will go on forever.

Readings

2 Samuel 7, 1-5, 8-12, 14, 16

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

Aim: To see how Gabriel's news to Mary fitted in with God's promise to King David.

Starter

Pass the ring. Thread a ring on a length of string. Everyone holds the string, passing it through their hands. One person stands in the middle of the circle. The ring gets passed secretly along the string from hand to hand. The person in the middle has to guess who has it. When that person guesses right, someone else takes over in the center. Finish by giving a pack of candy to whomever is holding the ring, and asking them to pass the candy around to everyone, so that as the ring is revealed, everyone is given a gift.

Teaching

Explain that all through the hundreds of years before Jesus was born, God's promise had been passed on, from one generation to the next, sometimes seen and sometimes hidden from public view, until at the first Christmas, when Jesus the Christ was born, that message was seen clearly, and has been bringing blessing to everyone ever since.

But what was the message? Let's first go back in time to about 1000 BC—that's about three thousand years ago. We are in the city of Jerusalem, and this is King David. (Dress a child appropriately.) He is thinking deeply. (King David thinks deeply.) Then he has a good idea. (Turn on flashlight above his head.) He talks it over with Nathan the prophet. (Choose someone to be Nathan and give them both the script on page 131.)

Then choose two children to be Mary and Gabriel, and give them the second script.

Praying

Once in royal David's city
stood a lowly cattle shed,

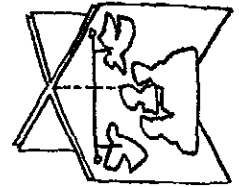
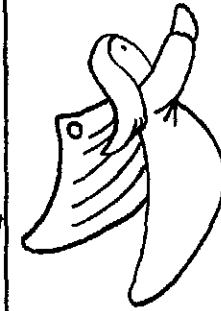
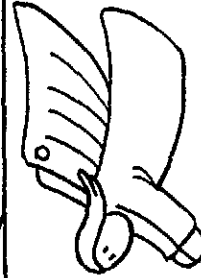
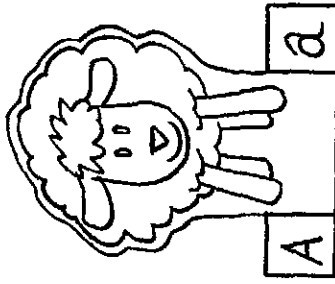
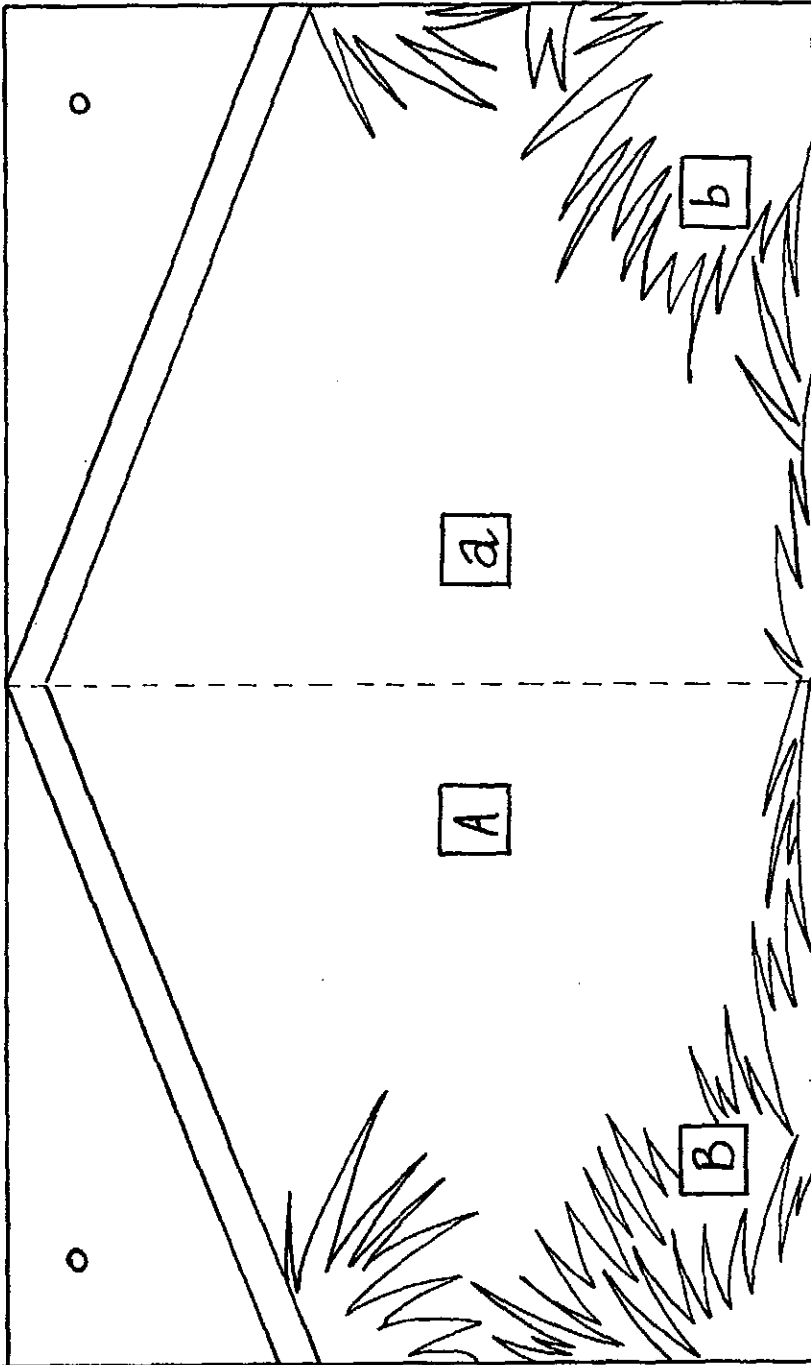
where a mother laid her baby
in a manger for a bed.

Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.

Activities

Today the pop-up model will be completed, using the drawings and instructions on the activity sheet, strengthened with thin cardboard. Also discuss with the children how God's promise to King David was fulfilled when Mary said yes to God. Jesus' kingdom is still growing today.

Notes



Stick all four weeks' models together like this.

Have it as a table center on Christmas Day!

To pray this week

Once in royal David's city
 stood a lowly cattle shed,
 where a mother laid her baby
 in a manger for a bed.
 Mary was that mother mild,
 Jesus Christ her little child.

Liturgy of the Word for Children----Fourth Sunday of Advent

Saying YES to Christmas!: Family Activity

Christmas is a busy time for families. Sometimes people are so wrapped up in all the details of writing cards, putting up decorations, baking cookies, and so forth that they forget what Christmas is really all about. Here are some ways that your YES can help your family and friends say their YES to a merry Christmas for all.

- * Offer to help put up the tree.
- * Make the cookies or help decorate them.
- * Offer to take care of the younger children or do some of the shopping.
- * Be the official gift-wrap person for the whole family.
- * Be cheerful, especially when everyone is tired and stressed out.
- * Think more about what you will be giving than what you will be getting.

Remember that Jesus is God's special gift to you and thank God for Christmas!

Christmas Tree Lighting Service: Family Activity

These past few weeks you have been busy making ornaments for the Christmas tree. Now it's time to bless the tree and its festive ornaments with light.

LEADER: The Lord will be our light.

ALL: Glory to God in the highest heaven.

LEADER: The Lord gives love to our world.

ALL: Peace to all people on earth.

LEADER: Accept our love, Lord, as it is represented in this tree of light.

ALL: You are the Light of the World.

LEADER: May we as a family continue to grow in our love for you.

ALL: You are the Light of the World.

LEADER: Help us to live always in the will of God.

ALL: You are the Light of the World.

LEADER: Bless each of us that we might go out into the world to proclaim the good news of this season.

ALL: You are the Light of the World.

PRAYER: Almighty God, you who have given us the light that is Jesus, teach us to rejoice in his coming as Mary rejoiced. When we light this tree of love, help us to remember that our lives, like the life that Jesus lived, should be light to our neighbors, light that shines toward you. This we ask through Jesus, your Son, the Light of the World today. Amen.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

I will do what God asks

INTRODUCTION

Mary loved God so much that she was ready to do whatever he asked of her. Trusting him completely and always ready to please him, she agreed to become the mother of his son, Jesus.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

Light the candles and say Candle Prayer 1.

SORRY

Help the children reflect quietly for a few moments, thinking over the past week and all the things they have done. Have they always done what would please God? Have their words and actions been thoughtful and kind?

Ask one of the children to choose a "sorry color" and then read the corresponding Sorry Prayer aloud to the group.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Sing the Advent Song.

GOSPEL (LUKE 1:26-38)

In a town called Nazareth, lived a girl called Mary, who was engaged to marry a man named Joseph. God sent the angel Gabriel to deliver a special message to Mary. The angel appeared to her and said, "Be happy, Mary, for God is with you."

Mary felt frightened and uncertain about what the angel had said, but he continued, "Do not be afraid, for you have been blessed by God and are going to have a baby, and you will call him Jesus." Mary wondered at the angel's words because she was not married to Joseph, but the angel explained, "The Holy Spirit will come to you, and the power of God will cover you with its shadow. This baby will be holy and will be called the Son of God."

Then the angel told her that her cousin Elizabeth was also expecting a baby. Mary said to the angel, "I am God's servant and will do whatever he asks of me." Then the angel left her.

DISCUSSION

Ask the children to tell you what they know about angels. No one really knows, but often they are depicted as beautiful winged creatures dressed in white and with a halo on their heads. When angels appear they are usually as messengers of God.

In the Old Testament, God sent an angel to stop Abraham from sacrificing his son Isaac to prove his love for God. In the New Testament, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream telling him to marry Mary, and many angels appeared to some shepherds on a hillside to tell them about the newborn savior. Later an angel appeared in a dream to warn Joseph to take his family to Egypt to escape from King Herod.

How do you think Mary felt when the angel appeared to her? At first she was frightened and confused by the angel, but he was able to reassure her and calm her fears. What message did the angel have for Mary? That she would become the mother of God and that her cousin Elizabeth was already expecting a baby.

How did Mary react to Gabriel's message? She listened carefully to his words and agreed to do God's will. At the moment she agreed to become the mother of God, she also became the mother of us all.

ACTIVITY

If the group is small, copy the picture and ask the children to color it. If you have a large group, enlarge and cut out the individual elements of the picture, and reassemble these on a large sheet of paper after they have been colored. Spend some time with the children discussing the picture and the event it depicts.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Mary said "yes" to God's messenger and became the mother of God. Let us ask for her help so that we, too, will always say "yes" to whatever God asks of us.

Hail Mary...