



## Post Christmas Reflections

### Aim

To reconnect with the inquirers, reflect on their experience of Christmas.

To engage in prayerful reflection on the Feasts of the Holy Family and the Epiphany.

### Resources needed

*Leaders*

- Scripture Passages
- Fr Brian Gleeson article
- Prayer focus items

*Young People*

- Journals and handouts

### Prayer Focus

**Nativity Scene** \* (*with the wise men – or items representing their gifts*)

**Bible** \*

**Candle** \*

**White cloth**

\* Items to be placed on the prayer table as part of the opening prayer

### Liturgical Link

There are different Gospel readings for each of the Christmas Masses: Vigil /Midnight, dawn and during the day.

### Overview

- Our Experience of Christmas
- The challenge of the feast
- The 12 days of Christmas
- Feast of the Holy Family
- The Epiphany of the Lord

### Preparation by Catechists

- *Familiarity with content and resources*
- *Readiness to share understanding and experiences of God*
- *Pray for the young people and leaders*

### Scripture Passages

- Luke 2:1-14 'A saviour has been born'
- Luke 2:22:40 Simeon & Anna
- Matthew 2:1-12 Following the star

### Tenets of Faith (Faith Formation)

- Christmas Day is the climax of the second great season of the Church year – Advent & Christmas.
- The day celebrates the incarnation; God, taking on human form in Jesus
- The birth, life and death of Jesus are the revelation of God.

## Welcome and Introduction

- Welcome the young people and thank them for coming back from the break.
- Introduce the focus, identify the aim and format for the gathering.
- Explain that the opening prayer recalls the incarnation. Prayerful reflection will also be interwoven throughout the time together.
- Preparation for the Opening Prayer, which requires involvement of group members singing, Be Still and know that I am God; the phrase is sung three times, on each occasion. Three young people will bring objects to the prayer table. One, or more readers are also needed.

## Opening Prayer

† Leader invites all present to sit comfortably, opening themselves to God's presence.

**All** *Be Still and know that I am God - sung three times*

**Reader** In the beginning was the Word  
and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.

The word was with God from the beginning  
and through him all things were created.  
No created thing came into being without him.

**All** *Be Still and know that I am God - sung three times  
(as the open bible is placed on the prayer table)*

**Reader** In the Word was life,  
and that life was the light of humankind.  
The light shines in the darkness,  
And the darkness can never put it out.

**All** *Be Still and know that I am God - sung three times  
(as the candle is placed on the prayer table and lit)*

**Reader** He was in the world:  
but the world – though it owed its being to him - did not recognise him.  
He came to his own  
and his own people would not receive him.  
But to those who did receive him,  
he gave the right to become children of God,  
not through human desire, but through God alone.

**All** - sung response *Be Still and know that I am God - sung three times  
(the nativity scene is placed on the prayer table)*

**Reader** So the Word became flesh;  
he came among us and was one of us.  
And we saw his glory,  
the glory which benefits God's only son,  
full of grace and truth.

**All** *Be Still and know that I am God - sung three times*

## Reflection

### → Activity 1 – *Reflecting on our experience*

As previously mentioned, reflecting on our experiences is an important aspect of the discernment process throughout this journey. Each of you were encouraged to approach the events of Christmas with new eyes and a heart open to witness God's love. The first reflection focuses on those experiences:

- *How was my preparation for and celebration of this feast different from previous years?*
- *What did I notice or hear differently in the scripture readings?*
- *Did any of the Christmas rituals take on a new meaning?*
- *Was there something you found particularly enjoyable, enlightening, or surprising?*
- *In this season of gift giving reflect on the gifts received over the years that you have treasured, and the reasons for that?*
- *What do you regard as your most treasured gift as a human being, and how well do you use it in service to God and to others?*



### Scripture Reading – *The Nativity*

There are different Gospel readings for each of the Christmas Masses: Vigil /Midnight, dawn and during the day. The account from Luke is used as the Vigil /midnight mass

**Luke 2:1-14** *'A saviour has been born'*

- Hearing the story again invite the young people to take note of the words and images they respond to and the feelings that emerge.
- How significant is the fact that a saviour has been born – for me?



Explain that Luke's account of the birth of Jesus is very different from Matthew's, which serves as a reminder that we must read these as religious rather than historical stories. Luke goes to great lengths to situate Jesus in human history. He is born in a specific time and place. It shows how God works through human beings, human agencies and human institutions. No one could be further removed from Mary and Joseph than the Emperor of Rome, but it is through Augustus' edict that the words of the prophets of Israel are fulfilled. Nevertheless, this astonishing news 'of great joy' is not given to the powerful but to the poor. Overwhelmingly, this gospel leaves us with a sense of great rejoicing both in heaven and on earth. God has come amongst us! The mystery of the incarnation is truly worth celebrating, since through it God's plan for us is fully revealed.

### → Activity 2 – *The challenge of the Christmas story*

- Read aloud each section of the text by Fr Brian Gleeson, *CP, Melbourne Australia*, to the group; inviting them to simply listen and reflect, preferably with eyes closed, to be free from distractions.

<https://realhomilies.wordpress.com/2017/12/23/christmas-and-us-a-reflection-from-fr-brian-gleeson-cp-melbourne-australia/>

- Following each section encourage the young people to use their journals to jot down thoughts or feelings prompted by the words heard.
- Provide copies of the text for individuals to view during the reflection time if need be.
- Invite sharing and help tease out or clarify any issues that arise.

### † **Prayerful moment**

- Invite the group members to reflect on and then express in a word or phrase, what the coming of Jesus into the world means for them.
- Invite each person to speak aloud the word or phrase in turn. (Have gentle music playing in the background. Allow individuals to take their time.)

### ➔ **Activity 3 – The 12 Days of Christmas**

While many of you may know of the 12 days of Christmas song, do you know the significance of the 12 days or any of the elements within the song?

- Encourage conversations in 2's and 3's
- Invite sharing and then provide some information



The 12 days of Christmas is the period in Christian theology that marks the span between the birth of Christ and the coming of the Magi, the three wise men. It begins on December 25 (Christmas) and runs through January 6 (the Epiphany, the visit of the Three Kings).

The 12 days of Christmas mark the time it taken after the birth of Jesus for the magi, to travel to Bethlehem for the Epiphany; their recognition of the son of God.

From 1558 until 1829, Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. The song has two levels of meaning: the surface meaning, plus the hidden meaning, known only to members of the Church, describing the gifts that define different aspects of the faith. *See 12 days of Christmas resource; which can also be a handout.*

### † **Prayerful moment**

Invite the group members to listen to the 12 days of Christmas song while reflecting on its meaning. Either have the explanation on the screen or give to individuals as a handout, included in Advent resource folder.



### **Scripture Reading – Feast of the Holy Family** (*The Sunday after Christmas*)

There are very few accounts of the family life of Jesus in the Gospels. Those that are included have important messages for us. Each of the liturgical years depicts a different story. The Year B one tells of the encounters of Mary and Joseph with Simeon and Anna when presenting Jesus in the temple.

**Luke 2:22-40** *'The child grew, filled with wisdom.'*

- Encourage the young people to note anything that strikes them as they hear the passage read.
- Invite them to consider how different the future may mean for them, having chosen to allow Jesus to be a focus in their life.



Explain that families are complex, increasingly so in society today, especially for those whose parents are trying to encourage spiritual growth and religious affiliation. Luke's Gospel demonstrates that the Holy Family were devout Jews who observed the law. So too were Simeon and Anna. For all four the time of waiting for the fulfilment of the promises God made to Israel have come to an end. Though Simeon and Anne can now be set free by this knowledge, Mary and Joseph still have an important part to play in God's plan.



### **Prayerful moment**

- Invite the group members to quietly give thanks to God for their parents, and for all who have encourage or are supporting them on their faith journey.



### **Scripture Reading – *The Epiphany of the Lord* (Jan 6<sup>th</sup>, or the nearest Sunday)**

There are very few accounts of the family life of Jesus in the Gospels. Those that are included have important messages for us. Each of the liturgical years depicts a different story. The Year B one tells of the encounters of Mary and Joseph with Simeon and Anna when presenting Jesus in the temple.

**Matthew 2:1-12** *'They came from the east to pay homage.'*

- Encourage the young people to note anything that strikes them as they hear the passage read.
- Invite them to consider a time when they have been searching, for meaning, for purpose, for a gift or for an answer.



The word Epiphany comes from a Greek word meaning manifestation or showing. The wise men were probably astrologers from Persia, they represent all who seek God with a sincere heart.

Matthew's community largely Jewish Christians, struggling to come to terms with the movement of the gospel into the Gentile world. Matthew is trying to reassure his community that all who recognise and honour the Christ are welcomed into the new people of God.



### **Prayerful moment**

- Invite the group members to quietly give thanks to God for the gifts they are grateful for having received from God, and for the unexpected accolades they have received from both friends and strangers.

## **Closing Prayer**

**Leader** God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God,

**All** We bless you

**Leader** Object of the Magi's search, subject of an old man's song, fulfilment of the Baptist's preaching

**All** We bless you.

**Leader** Mary's son, Joseph's son, God's only son,

**All** We bless you.