



St. Joseph's Family Activities

The 12 days of Christmas 2021

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A Special Christmas and New Year Edition!

In this edition, I have changed the format somewhat and have given a focus to each of the 12 days of Christmas. 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 to chat in the family and at school about them as they will remind people about the deeper meaning of Christmas and our salvation in Christ.

Each day there is a reflection and a picture to complete and cut out. They can be hung up on a string – please send me any pictures if you have done this. Where the day is a feast day (and there are a lot) I have included something from the liturgy, otherwise I have just focussed on the religious meaning of each of the days.

This edition extends to cover the Baptism of the Lord on 9th January.

I wish you a blessed Christmas and please do send me feedback on these pages and photos of any that you have done.

As ever, if you wish to see past copies of these sheets, please go to <https://www.stjosephsmalvern.org/j/> and then click on the dropdown box for past editions.

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

Christmas begins on the evening of the 24th December and ends... some say with Epiphany, some say with the Baptism of the Lord (Sunday after Epiphany) and certainly, “Ordinary time” begins on the Monday after the Baptism of the Lord, However I like to keep my crib up until the Presentation in the Temple, after all, if I take it down in early January, the wise men have only just arrived!



The family is the “domestic Church” and if we are not able to gather in person with the parish, it's a good idea to set aside special times to pray with the family, even if it is just 10 minutes two or three times a week. These are graced moments. Light a candle and have a few moments' silence and remind everyone that they are in the presence of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These times are very precious and even if it is just a few minutes after a meal, it can be a fruitful time. Don't bite off more than you can chew! Start with just a few moments and build up the scope and variety of prayers slowly. Give everyone the opportunity to voice their own prayers as well as reciting traditional prayers.

**Speaking/Learning the faith
(which the Church calls
“professing the faith”)**

**Living it (in Christ) – i.e. the
choices we make in
everyday life**

**Celebrating it in the Liturgy
and the Sacraments**

**Christian
prayer.**

25th December, the First Day of Christmas



Gospel for Christmas

Gospel

Luke 2:1-14

**'In the town of David a saviour
has been born to you'**

Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census – the first – took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn.

In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turns to watch their flocks during the night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified, but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing:

'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace to men who enjoy his favour.'

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

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: What did Mary wrap baby Jesus in? (A. Swaddling clothes – this was usual as babies were bound tightly to help them adjust from the tight womb to the open air. Traditionally babies who were swaddled were more comfortable and slept better.)

Q: What is a manger? (A. It is a trough or basket for animal feed, often fixed to the wall so that animals can pull hay through the bars.)

Q: These two facts are very interesting... let us go now to the end of Jesus' life. When He died on the Cross, what happened to His body? (A: His body was wrapped in cloths and He was placed in a tomb.)

Q: So, when we hear about Jesus' being wrapped in swaddling cloths, we can remember that He came to die for us and be once more wrapped in cloths and placed in a cave.

Q: Jesus was placed in a feeding trough; He was not food for animals, but He became food for us. When was this? (A: At the Last Supper when He gave us His Body and Blood in Holy Communion.)

Q: Some traditional nativity scenes used on Christmas cards have a tree or a wooden pillar that comes from a tree, in the background. Others make use of cross shapes to indicate that Jesus came to die for us to save us from our sins. Do you have any at home which have this on them? (A: Hint – look at the stable structure or is the star cross-shaped...)

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.

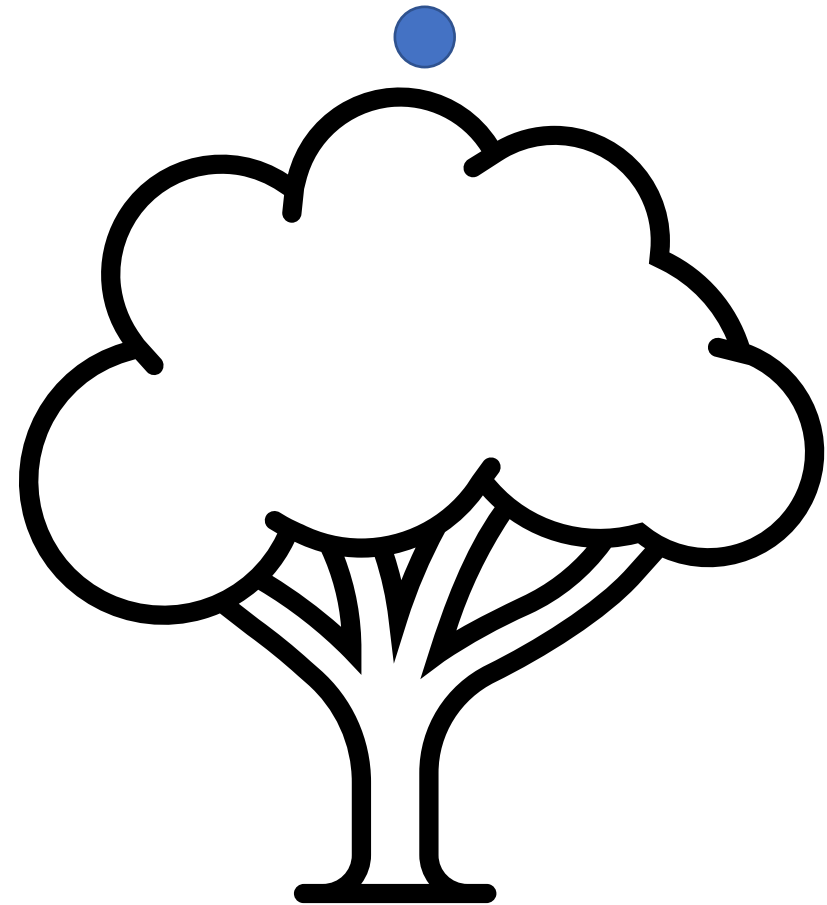
1. The one Jesus Christ (who was to die on a tree/cross).

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**

Feast of the Holy Family

Luke 2:41-52

Every year the parents of Jesus used to go to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up for the feast as usual. When they were on their way home after the feast, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents knowing it. They assumed he was with the caravan, and it was only after a day's journey that they went to look for him among their relations and acquaintances. When they failed to find him they went back to Jerusalem looking for him everywhere.

Three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the doctors, listening to them, and asking them questions; and all those who heard him were astounded at his intelligence and his replies. They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, 'My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.'

'Why were you looking for me?' he replied. 'Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?' But they did not understand what he meant.

He then went down with them and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority.

His mother stored up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men.

The Gospel of the Lord

R/: **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ**

26th December, The 2nd Day of Christmas



Discussion on the Gospel

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

Normally the day after Christmas is the feast of St. Stephen, the first martyr, but this year as it is a Sunday, it is the feast of the Holy Family. This is one of my favourite feasts of the year as it celebrates that God came to earth to live and grow up in a family. Our families are sacred places and are hallowed by the fact that Jesus Christ grew up in the context of a family.

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

Q: At 12, Jesus probably celebrated His Bar Mitzvah which was a "coming of age" celebration, meaning that He was now considered grown up in the community. What did Jesus do differently this year? (A: He stayed behind talking and listening to the teachers [doctor does not mean a medical person but someone who has studied a lot and who teaches].)

Q: Why were Mary and Joseph worried? (A: Because they did not know where Jesus was.)

Q: What did Jesus do after He had been found? (A: He went back to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph and grew up and lived under Mary and Joseph's authority.)

Q: What does "living under their authority" mean? (A: Jesus did as He was told.)

Q: If Jesus, who is God, was humble enough to do as He was told by His earthly parents, then what can we learn from this? (A: That growing up in our families, we have to do as we are told too.)

Q: When do we find it the hardest to do as we are told? (A: Open....)

Q: How can we learn to do as we are told? (A: Make the Sign of the Cross, ask the Holy Spirit to help us and give us the grace,)

Finish by praying the act of contrition together carefully:

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.

2nd Day of Christmas, Two Turtle Doves

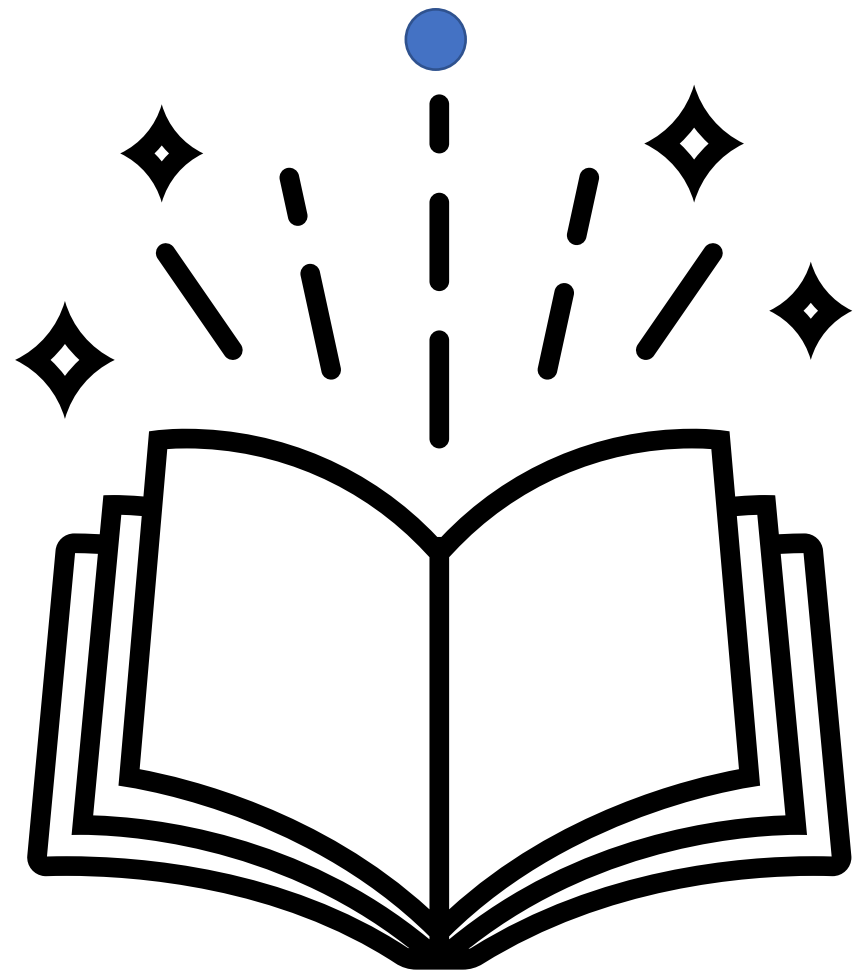
On the Second day of Christmas my true love
gave to me, Two turtle doves...

2. The Two Testaments of the Bible

Our heavenly 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 of Magdala came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb' she said 'and we don't know where they have put him.'

So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb, saw the linen cloths on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed.

The Gospel of the Lord

R/: *Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ*

Give me O Holy Spirit, more faith, more hope, and more love each day. Amen.

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 wrote 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

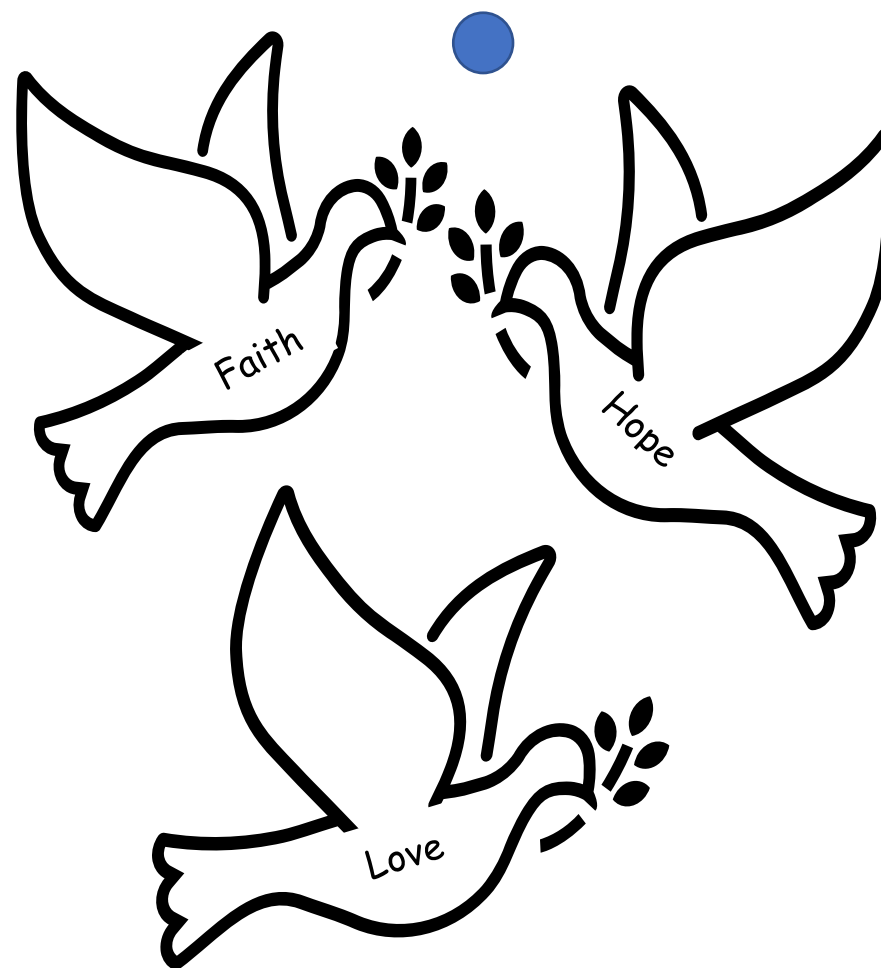
At our Baptism we are given three very special gifts to help us to grow closer to Jesus who leads us to His Father by the grace of the Holy Spirit. They are called the "theological" gifts of **faith, hope and love**. "Theological" means that they come from God. These gifts will grow stronger with practice!

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

Matthew 2:13-18

After the wise men had left, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him.' So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod was dead. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet:

I called my son out of Egypt.

Herod was furious when he realised that he had been outwitted by the wise men, and in Bethlehem and its surrounding district he had all the male children killed who were two years old or under, reckoning by the date he had been careful to ask the wise men. It was then that the words spoken through the prophet Jeremiah were fulfilled:

*A voice was heard in Ramah,
sobbing and loudly lamenting:
it was Rachel weeping for her children,
refusing to be comforted because they were 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.....



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 studied for the priesthood to become a political ruler, not a religious person, 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 King Henry was trying to rule the Church, which he was not supposed to do. The King got very angry with him, and Thomas even 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 heard 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 and endowed his shrine in the cathedral (which a later King Henry had destroyed during the Reformation). St Thomas Becket is remembered for his courage in defence of the rights of the Church.

Q: What did God give St. Thomas Becket the courage to do? (A: To give up his life.)

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 gift to us 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 gift of freedom from slavery in Egypt, the gift of the Ten Commandments and manna in the desert.

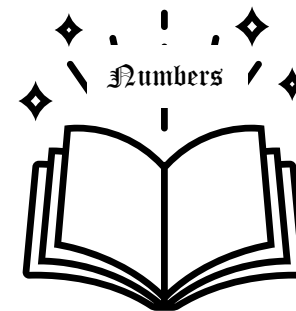
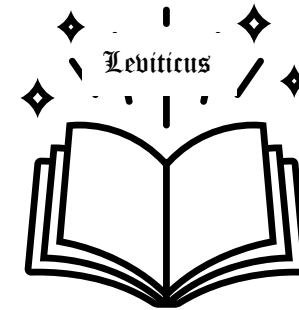
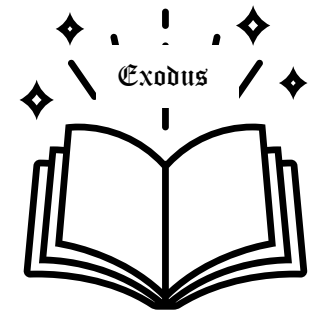
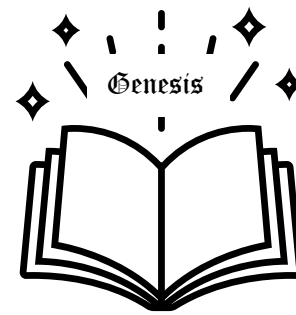
Leviticus: God's gift of the Law which was fulfilled in Jesus' teaching.

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.

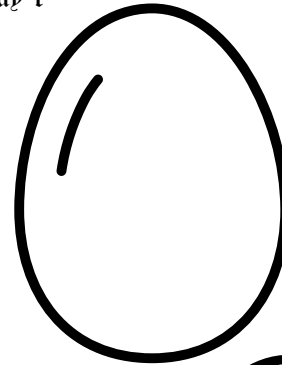
Day 4: God gives us the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens; and it was good.

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

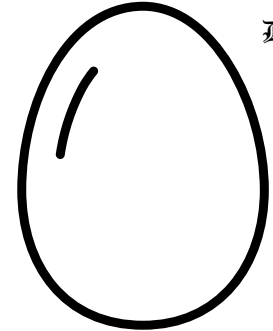
Day 6: God said, "Let us make man in our image... so God created man... male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:26-27). God has given us the precious gift of life. And it was very good.

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

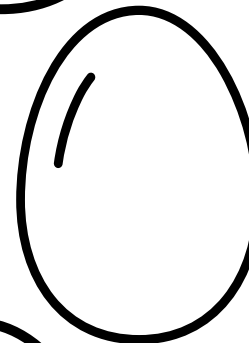
Day 1



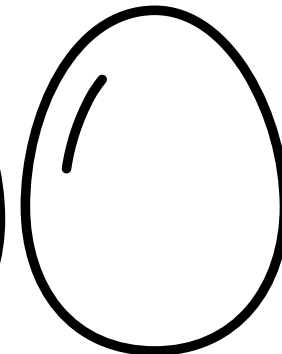
Day 2



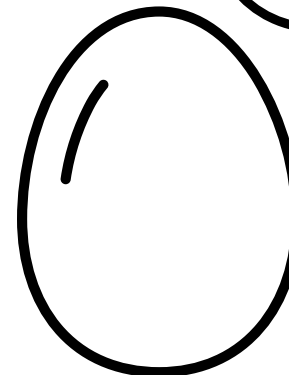
Day 3



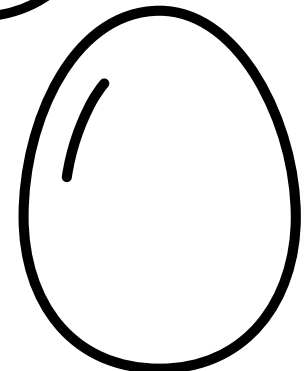
Day 4



Day 6



Day 5



"Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished... and God rested on the seventh day... He blessed the seventh day and made it holy" (Gen. 2:1-3).

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.
4. **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

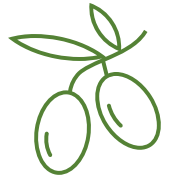
Eucharist

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; 8th Day of Christmas, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God



Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God

Second reading

St Paul' letter to the Galatians 4:4-7

When the appointed time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law and to enable us to be adopted as sons. The proof that you are sons is that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts: the Spirit that cries, 'Abba, Father', and it is this that makes you a son, you are not a slave any more; and if God has made you son, then he has made you heir.

The Word of the Lord,
Thanks be to God.

Discussion on Mary, Mother of God.

- ✠ Light your Christmas candle
- ✠ Make the Sign of the Cross
- ✠ Read the explanation below and then read the second reading 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. (This is a mystery which we in our human minds we cannot understand, but any mystery is an invitation to reflect and meditate on our faith.)

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. This is why St Paul can say that we are "adopted" as sons (and daughters). At Baptism, the Holy Spirit unites (joins) us to Jesus in a very special way and because we are joined to Jesus who is both God and man, Jesus therefore joins us to His Father.

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.

Q: Note that the reading begins with "the appointed time." This shows that "Christmas" is a part of God's entire plan from the beginning. Who was born at the "appointed time"? (A: God's Son, Jesus Christ.)

Q: Who was Jesus' mother? (A: Mary.)

Q: Why is Mary the Mother of God? (A: Because Jesus is fully God as well as fully man.)

Q: Who joins us to Jesus at Baptism? (A: The Holy Spirit.)

Q: How can we address (speak to) God because we are joined to Jesus? (A: We can call Him "Father".)

Let us now pray the *Our Father*, and also the *Hail Mary*, where we say, "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.*

Draw a beautiful picture of Mary.



Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

2nd Sunday of Christmas

Gospel: John 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word:
and the Word was with God
and the Word was God.
He was with God in the beginning.
Through him all things came to be,
not one thing had its being but through
him.

All that came to be had life in him
and that life was the light of men,
a light that shines in the dark,
a light that darkness could not
overpower.

...

The Word was made flesh,
he lived among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory that is his as the only Son of
the Father,
full of grace and truth.

The Gospel of the Lord

R/: **Praise to you Lord Jesus
Christ**

Sunday 2nd January; 9th Day of Christmas



Discussion on the Gospel

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

Today's Gospel comes from the prologue to John's Gospel. I have cut it short as the extracts here are so rich that we could spend a lifetime meditating on just these verses alone. The emphasis is to show that Jesus is God who has existed from the beginning and in time, took on human flesh. As we saw yesterday, when Jesus was born, He was God and man, and Mary is called the Mother of God.

Q: What does John say at the beginning about the Word? (A: He was with God from the beginning/was with God and was God.)

Q: Who is John talking about here? (A: Jesus – Jesus is the Word of God as He is God speaking.)

Q: What kind of light is the Word? (A: One that shines in the darkness.)

Q: What do we have to do if we go into a room and it's dark? (A: Turn on the light.)

Q: What would happen if we didn't turn the light on? (A: We might fall over, bump into things, step on things etc.)

Q: What do we have in Church to remind us that Jesus is the light that shines for us?
(A: Candles.)

Q: When we are baptised, we are given a candle to remind us that we need to shine like Jesus. How can we be lights to other people? (A: We can tell them about Jesus, we can pray for them, we can be kind to them, we can help them...)

Q: Let's think about one person we can be a light to this week. Who are you thinking about,? (A: Open)

“Let your light shine upon other people so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Jesus in Mt. 5:16)

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

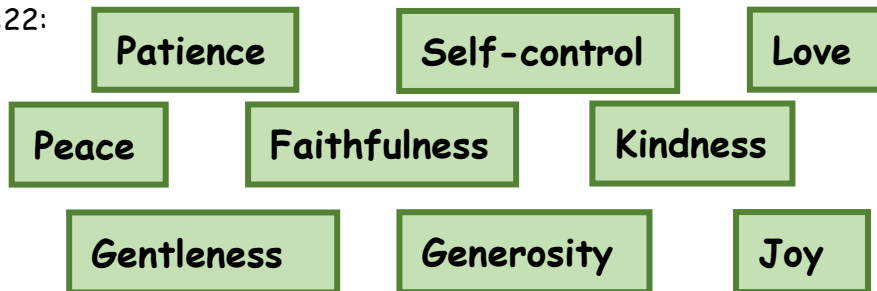
On the Ninth day of Christmas my true love gave
to me, Nine Ladies Dancing...

9. The Gift of Nine Fruits of the Spirit

The gifts of the Holy Spirit makes us dance and shine 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. If you plant an apple tree in dry rocky soil, it's not going to give you apples.

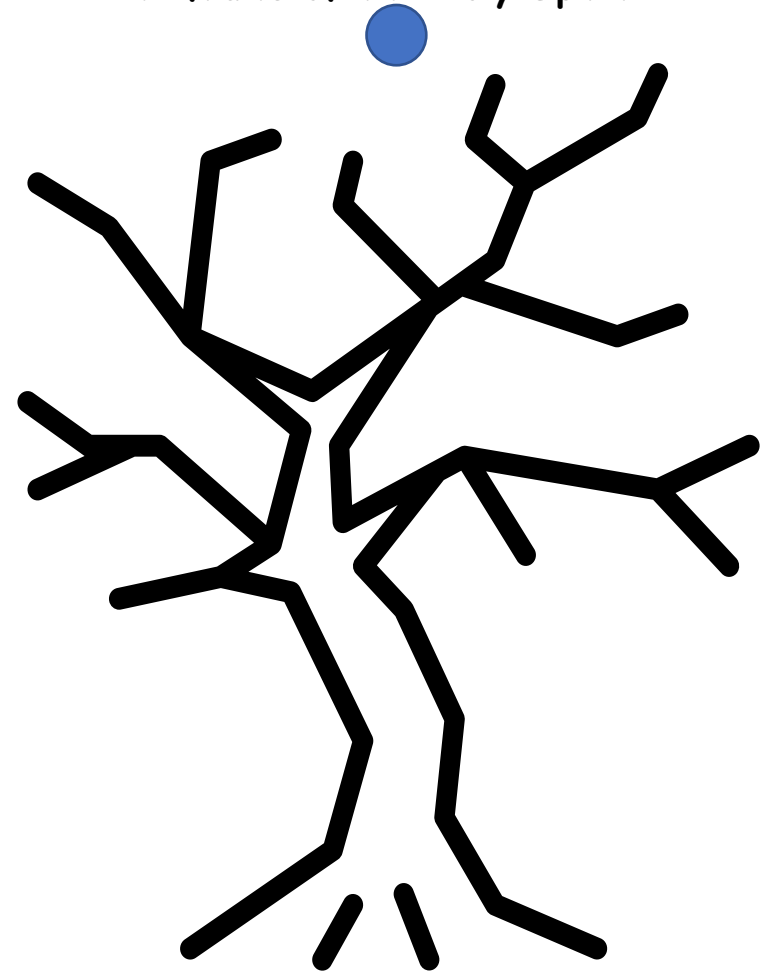
So, when we feed on Christ by reading the Bible, and listening to our teachers, when we come to Mass and pray, and when we do as we are told, we are like fruit trees growing in the right place, and we will have good fruit.

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



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, as 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; 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. As parents we know that children who have clear boundaries are happier and more secure. So, the Ten Commandments give us boundaries in our lives. If you are not sure, read these Ten Commandments out as they are written, and then read the opposite and see the picture you create!

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...

12. 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).

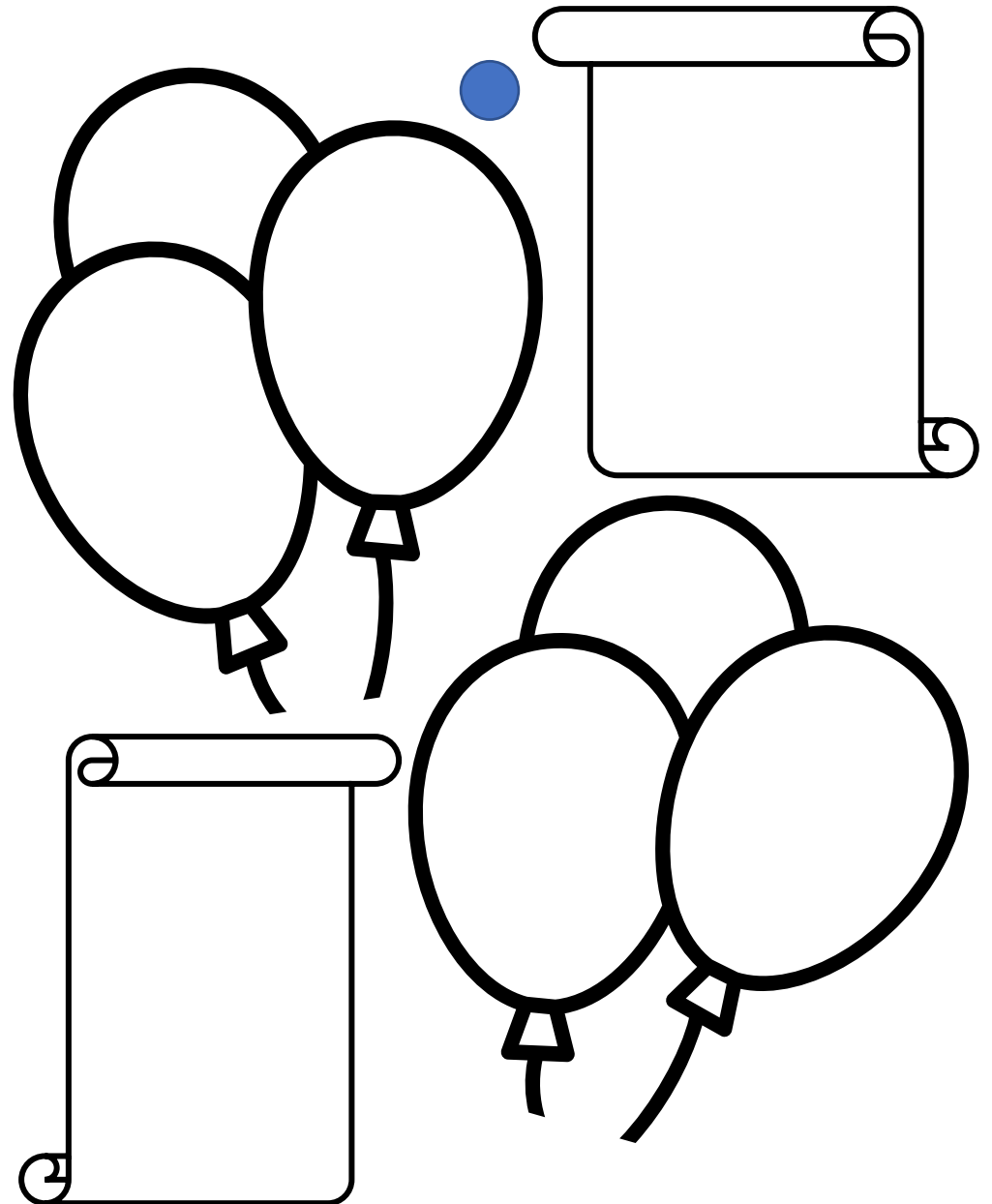
What could they have said to each other?

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,

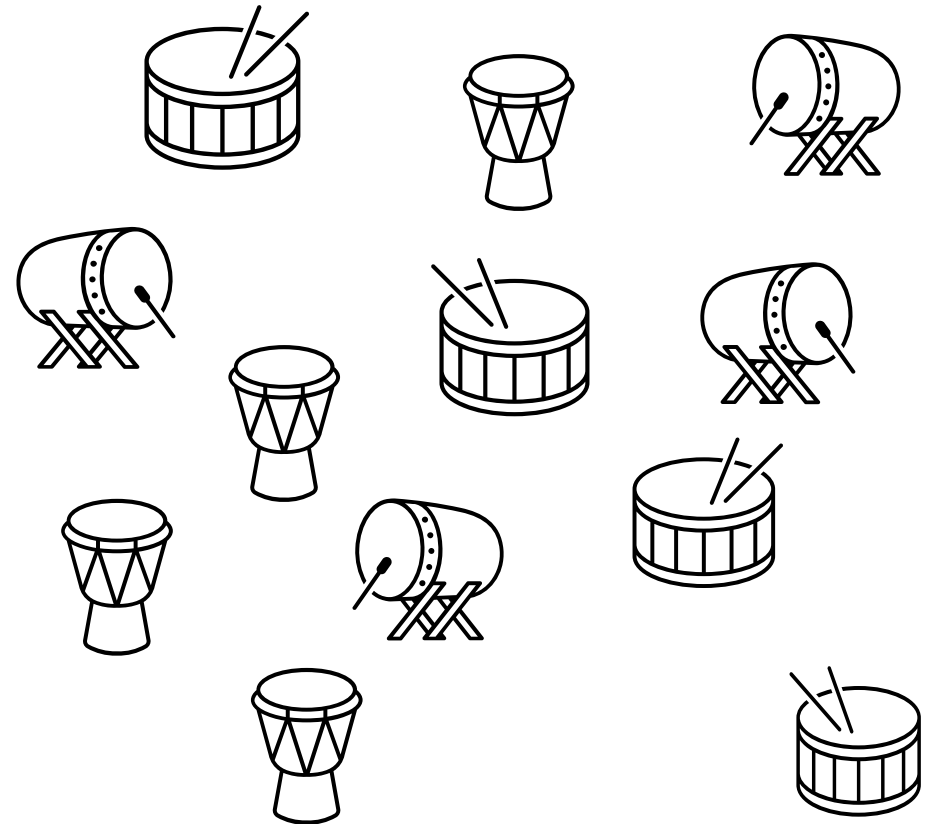
Article 9: The Holy catholic Church, the Communion of Saints,

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).

6th January; the Solemnity of the Epiphany



Solemnity of Epiphany, the visit of the wise men

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod, some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east. 'Where is the infant king of the Jews?' they asked. 'We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage.' When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 'At Bethlehem in Judaea,' they told him '...

Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared, and sent them on to Bethlehem. 'Go and find out all about the child,' he said 'and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage.' Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward, and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. But they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.

The Gospel of the Lord,

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ .

Discussion on the visit of the wise men

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

Twelfth night was last night – maybe you have taken your decorations down, or maybe they are still up (I like to keep them up until the Baptism of the Lord next Sunday, and the crib up until the feast of the presentation in the Temple). Epiphany is about when the infant Christ was shown to the world – Jesus came not only for the Jews, the chose 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.

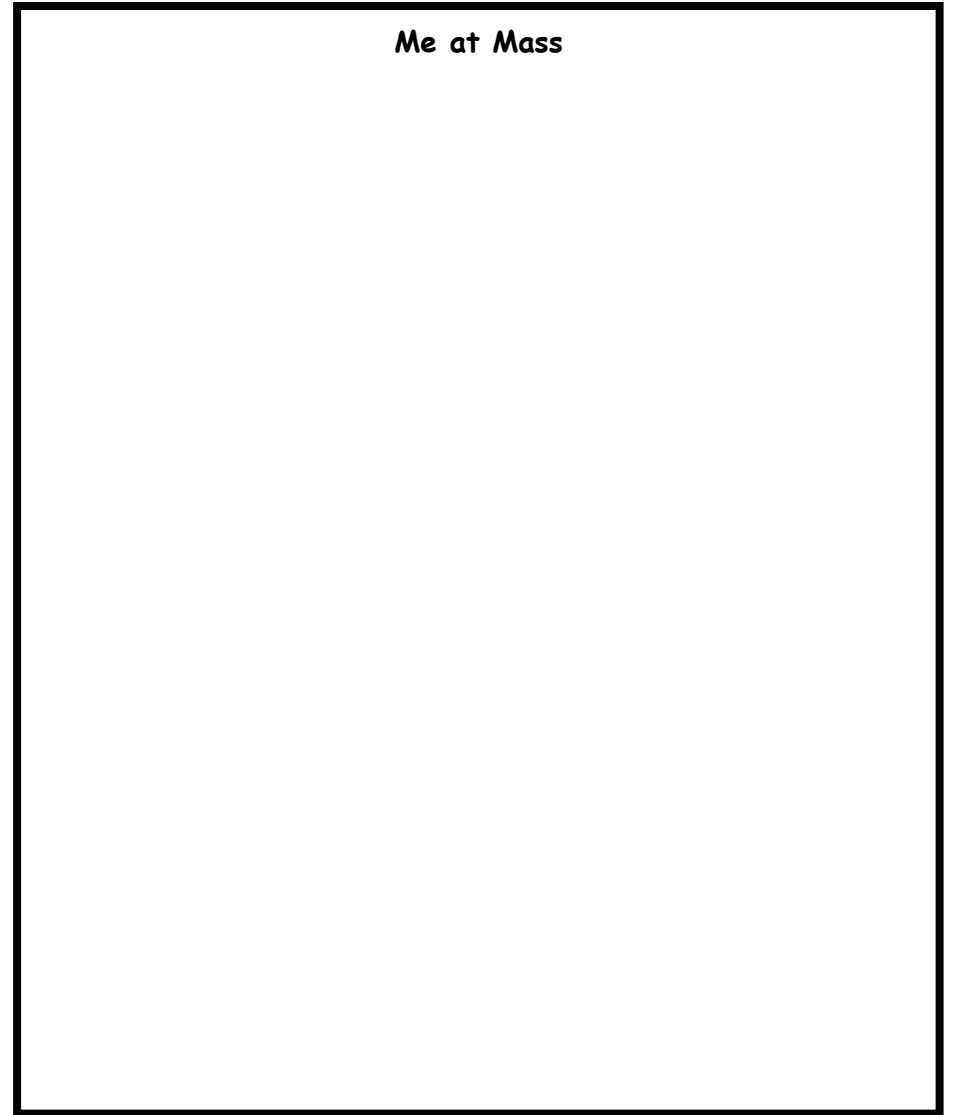
**O Sacrament most Holy, O Sacrament Divine,
All praise and all thanksgiving, Be every moment Thine.**

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



Me at Mass



Thursday 6th January – 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 do you think this means?** (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.**



9th January The Feast of Epiphany



Gospel

Luke 3:15-16,21-22

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Now when all the people had been baptised and while Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily shape, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.'

The Gospel of the Lord

R/: **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ**

Liturgy of the word on the Gospel

- ✠ Light you're a candle
- ✠ Make the Sign of the Cross
- ✠ Someone read the Gospel slowly

Discuss these questions together or do the activity below with the picture (or both).

Q: Who did John the Baptist say was following him? (A: Someone more powerful than him...)

Q: What does John the Baptist baptise with? (A: Water)

When we are baptised, the priest uses water, but it is not ordinary water.

Q: What kind of water is used in Baptism in our Church? (A: Holy water, water that has been blessed)

Q: What does John the Baptist say that Jesus will baptise with? (A: The Holy Spirit)

Q: What happened when Jesus came up out of the water? (A: Heaven opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove).

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

As we receive the Holy Spirit when we are baptised, and St. John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit, we can see that the priest is baptising with power from Jesus.

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

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).

If you have anyone's baptismal candle, may be light it and ask the Holy Spirit to help you in the coming week with all the home-schooling and work things that you have to do.

Baptism of Christ, Fra Angelico

On the next page is a copy of the painting by 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.

- ✚ **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). **Colour in John the Baptist. 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.)
- ✚ **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 need to keep looking at Jesus as they are. May be if you have time you can find out about St. Dominic and send your findings to the parish office. 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.



I

