

Manger

Memory Verse: And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger. Luke 2:7 (NRSV)

Study Plan: We read the story of Christ's birth and learn about the church year. This badge helps us understand that Jesus is God's gift to us and that we can give of ourselves to help others.



To earn the Manger badge, you will need to do the following:

Step 1: The Nativity Leader's initials: _____



The story of Jesus' birth is found in Matthew 1:18-2:12 and Luke 2:1-20.

In the town of Nazareth in Galilee, the angel Gabriel appeared to a young woman called Mary. Mary was promised in marriage to Joseph, who was descended from the family of David.



"The Lord is with you!" said Gabriel. "You are the most fortunate of women!"

Mary was troubled by the angel's greeting, and wondered why he had come to see her. "Do not be afraid," Gabriel reassured her. "God has chosen you to be the mother of a child, a son, who shall be called Jesus. He will be great and his kingdom will never end."

"But how is this possible?" Mary asked. "I am still a girl, and not yet married."

"The Holy Spirit will come to you, and God's grace will be with you, for your child will be known as the Son of God."

At these words, Mary knelt before Gabriel, and with head bowed, replied, "I am obedient to God's will, and shall be prepared for whatever you wish me to do."

She looked up, but the angel had gone.

Joseph was an honorable man, and when he saw that Mary was expecting a child, his first thought was to protect her from scandal and to quietly release her from her betrothal. But an angel came to him and said, "Do not be afraid to take Mary for your wife. She has conceived this child by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, whose name shall be Jesus."

At about the same time, the Emperor Augustus passed a law that everyone should return to their hometown so that a count could be made of every person in the empire. Joseph went with Mary, who was soon to give birth, to Bethlehem in Judea.

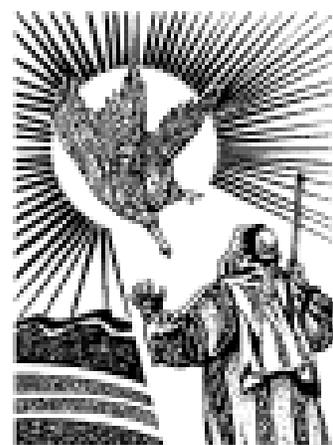


When at last they arrived, they found the city full of people. The streets were crowded, and every house and lodging already full. Joseph, anxious because he knew that the time of the baby's birth was near, searched and searched, but could find nowhere to stay.

Eventually, worn out by their journey, they took shelter in a stable, and there during the night Mary's son was born. She wrapped him in strips of linen, as was the custom, and gently laid him in a manger, where the animals fed. There was nowhere else for the baby to sleep.

In the fields near Bethlehem there were shepherds, tending their flocks. Suddenly a bright light blazed through the darkness, and an angel appeared. The shepherds, terrified, hid their eyes, but the angel reassured them. "I bring you good news; today in Bethlehem a child has been born, who will be the savior of all people. You will find him in a manger." Then the night sky was filled with heavenly beings, and the angels sang the praises of God. They spoke of peace on earth and friendship among everyone.

"We must go at once to see the child," the shepherds said. They hurried to the town where they soon found



Mary, Joseph, and the baby in the stable. Excitedly, they described what they had seen and heard, and went away praising God. Only Mary was silent, thinking quietly to herself of all that had happened.

A group of wise men traveled from the East to Jerusalem. When they arrived, they asked Herod, "Where is the child? Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen his star and have come to worship him."



Now Herod was king of Judea, and stories soon reached his ears of the coming of the Messiah, a child born to rule. Deeply troubled and determined to put to death any rival, he summoned together all the priests and lawyers of the Jewish people, and asked them in what city the child was to be born.

"In Bethlehem," they told him.

Then privately, Herod sent for the wise men, and pretending to be as religious as they, questioned them closely about the star: where they had seen it, what time it had appeared. "Go to Bethlehem," he said. "Make a thorough search for the child, and when you have found him, come and tell me, for I, too, wish to go and worship him."

So the wise men left Jerusalem and took the road for Bethlehem. The star guided them all the way, until, as they drew near the walls of the little town, it shone even brighter and stopped quite still over the place where Jesus was.



As they entered the house, they saw Mary and her small child, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him. Then they opened the heavy boxes they had carried with them, and spread out on the floor the magnificent gifts they had brought. They gave the baby Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own countries by another route.



Why do you think "Jesus is God's gift to us"? Give examples of how you can be a gift to others.

Talk about the Nativity story and complete the questions below as a group.

Jesus was born in _____

Jesus' mother was _____

His earthly father was _____

The story of Jesus' birth is found in _____

Jesus' birthday is celebrated on _____

_____ told the shepherds about Jesus' birth.

After he was born, the _____ came to visit Jesus.



Choose 1 of the following activities: Leader's initials _____

❖ Participate in a re-telling the story of Jesus' birth: perform in a

Christmas pageant, skit, or make a video.

❖ Create a Nativity scene for use at home or church, or give it to a senior home, a friend, a neighbor, a relative, etc. This is your chance to be creative - use any type of arts and crafts materials you like!



- ❖ Give the gift of yourself to others. Some ideas include: caroling at a senior home or delivering meals or goodies to shut-ins.



Wrapping gifts for the shelter.



Making quilts for children in stress.

Challenge Yourself!

Perform your favorite Christmas carol and explain its significance through writing, artwork or drama.

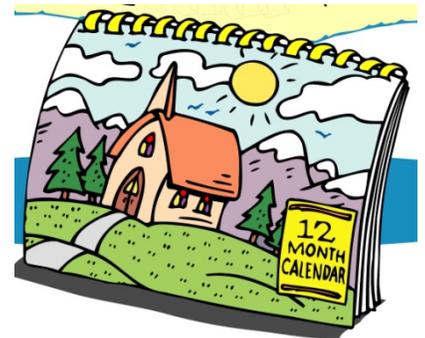
Give of yourself and help out with extra chores around the house or set up an outreach program in your parish. Examples: "Adopt a Family" or toys for kids at a soup kitchen.

Create a shadow box based on the Nativity theme or explore and discuss different artistic representations of the Nativity.

Step 2: Seasons of the Church Leader's initials _____



In the church, we observe a special cycle of days and seasons. These help us follow the life of Jesus. We use different colors to remind us of the purpose of each season.



The church year is based on the life of Jesus. It begins in Advent, the four Sundays before Christmas, which is a time to get ready for the birth of Jesus. The twelve days of the Christmas season are when we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus. Epiphany, January 6th, is the day we remember the visit of the three wise men to Bethlehem. The season of Epiphany, a time for growth, begins on January 6th and runs to Ash Wednesday. During Lent, which lasts from Ash Wednesday until Easter, we think about Jesus' fasting, sacrifice, and death. On Easter, we celebrate Jesus' victory over death; he is risen indeed! The season of Easter lasts fifty days, until Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost, we remember the coming of the Holy Spirit. The season after Pentecost lasts until Advent. In it we celebrate the growth of the church and the spread of the Good News, and we study about Jesus' life.



Why do we observe the seasons of the church year? _____

What do they help us remember? _____

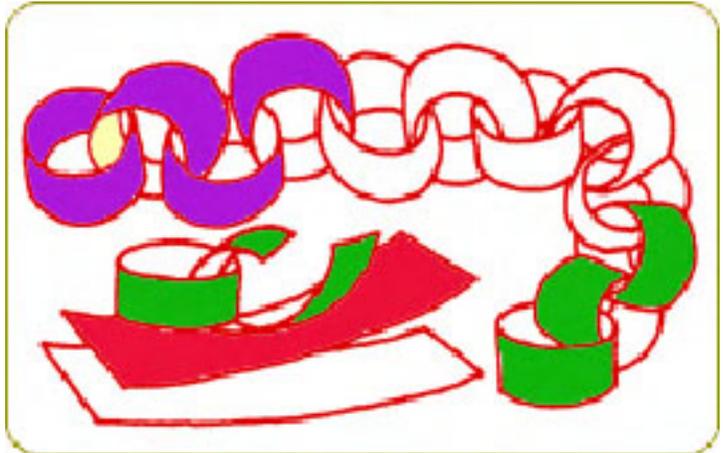
Choose 1 of the following activities:



- ❖ Create a poster illustrating each season, its color and its meaning.
- ❖ White is the traditional color of the Christmas season. Have an "All White" party at your GFS meeting, or host it one Sunday at "coffee hour." Serve white goodies like powdered sugar donuts or vanilla ice cream and white or clear beverages like milk or sparkling water. Ask everyone to dress in white, and don't forget the white decorations!



- ❖ Create a paper chain to illustrate the church calendar. Use colored paper and make links that represent the length of each season. For example Advent is four Sundays, so make four purple links in your chain. Keep the chain at your GFS meeting place or in a Sunday school classroom.



Color the Seasons of the Church Year worksheet on the next page. Next time you are in church, look for the seasonal color. Where did you find it?

Challenge Yourself!

A birth is a new beginning. Think of something you can do in the new year to help you grow in your relationship with Jesus. Share your ideas with your GFS friends.

SEASONS OF THE CHURCH YEAR

You may want to color the frames to match the season.



ADVENT

the four Sundays before Christmas

The color of Advent is purple (preparing for the king) or blue (symbolizes heaven and is Mary's color).



CHRISTMAS

December 25 - January 6;
the birth of our Lord

The color of Christmas is white, a color of joy.



EPIPHANY

January 6 - Ash Wednesday;
the coming of the wise men, the baptism of our Lord, the showing forth of Jesus

The color of the season is green for life and growing things.



LENT

Begins on Ash Wednesday, continues 40 days (not counting Sundays)
Includes Holy Week, the time between Palm Sunday and Easter

The color for Lent is purple for penitence and kingship; during Holy Week we use red for the passion of Jesus.



EASTER

We celebrate Jesus' resurrection.

The color of Easter is white for joy.



PENTECOST

On Pentecost we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. The season after Pentecost continues until Advent.

The color for Pentecost is red, for the fire of the Spirit. The color of the season is green, for life and growing things.

Color this badge for your notebook.

