



## UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

Quadrennial Theme: **SPIRITUALITY FOR THESE CRITICAL TIMES**

Season: **Advent and Christmastide**

Age Level: **Nursery, Kindergarten, Younger Elementary**

December 3, 2017

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent/Family Sunday**

***The Call of Mary***

Old Testament: **Isaiah. 7:14** (NRSV)

<sup>14</sup>Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

New Testament: **Luke 1:26-35** (NRSV)

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.' <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>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. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' <sup>35</sup>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.'

**General Concept: The woman chosen to be Jesus' mother was of lowly status in society.**

**Key Concept: Mary is Jesus' mother.**

*Exegesis of the Biblical References*

This prophetic pronouncement of Isaiah, serving as a sign of assurance from God, took place during the reign of King Ahaz when Judah was threatened by an invasion of the alliance of Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel. King Ahaz back then was worried that the rising superpower at the time, Assyria, was the greater source of danger to their long term security as a nation. In fear, the king was being pressured by the Syro-Israelite alliance to join them in this alliance of small nations to fight the imperial giant Assyria. Otherwise, the alliance was also threatening to attack Jerusalem and replace him with a more cooperative puppet king. Ahaz was facing both major threats and the temptation to seek help from other nations to ensure his and Judah's security. This was not a good move according to God as reminded by the prophet Isaiah. It is only in God that Ahaz should trust and not in political-military and other alliances. The prophet then spoke about a sign that God will manifest to the king. That is, that the young woman (*ha almah*) shall bear a son who shall be called *Immanuel* (God with us). The

sign is referring to Ahaz's wife and by bearing a son with this name, it means that the baby will be the continuing indicator of God's presence, keeping company with God's people in spite of the dangers and threats they are facing as a people. God is with them (us) even in moments of serious challenges and most terrifying times. There is no need to rely on political alliances even with foreign powers. A people need only to rely on God's abiding presence and power to save God's people. This is then again reiterated in Matthew's gospel and the reference to the prophetic sign is Mary, the mother of Jesus who became the embodiment of hope that God will again be with God's suffering and dominated people. They only need to trust the coming living sign and embodiment of this hope as the prophet then had assured King Ahaz in a very critical period in Israel's history.

The narrative of Luke tells how Mary was chosen to be the bearer of the Son of the Most High and the one who will inherit the throne of his ancestor David. Mary was a virgin or simply a young woman. The apparition of Gabriel, the messenger of the Lord, was really perplexing to her because she considered herself as a nobody. In the Jewish tradition, women are not considered as equal to men but here in the narrative is the story of a chosen woman, Mary. Another conflict arising in this narrative was the miraculous conception itself as she was just a young single woman and have just been engaged to Joseph unlike her cousin Elizabeth who can really have the possibility of bearing a child due to her being married to Zechariah. It was not yet permitted for engaged couples as in the case of Mary and Joseph to live together. But it is through the Divine Will of God, the Holy Spirit that made all this possible. The notion of God being powerful and breaking the limits of possibility is showcased in the narrative. God therefore is offering another perspective to see God's saving act through instruments which may be seen by many as impossible such as Mary; who is both woman and not yet married. The announcement of Gabriel will really make the situation of Mary worse especially in the eyes of her community because it is certainly unacceptable to be pregnant without being officially married. Yet, she boldly accepted God's will by submitting herself to God as a humble servant. This shows the spirituality of her courageous faith even if it will cost Mary her honor and respectability in the community. She had also shown her rootedness in the faith that God is in control in whatever may happen. It will be God who will decide the course of her life in accordance with God's Will and it will be by God's power that everything will have its moment of fulfillment. It is a vision of tomorrow which Mary truly believed and fully trusted.

#### *Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users*

To know Jesus, one must know his mother, Mary. What kind of a person was Mary? Not born to a family of means or high position, Mary didn't bring anything into her marriage with Joseph. Certainly, it didn't improve her social status with her marriage to an ordinary man. Apparently, Joseph was a migrant worker whose family moved from his ancestral town of Bethlehem to settle down in Nazareth. But Mary herself must be a formidable woman. She was certainly Jesus' first teacher of the Jewish Scriptures. As a devout mother, she impressed on her children's young minds Israel's heroic history and its heroes like Moses, the tribal judges and the prophets. Jesus saw how Mary struggled as a mother and provider of the family. At the same time, he watched her keep her dignity, poise and honor in the face of adversities and maybe scorn from society. Hardship and suffering was her daily fare, which prepared her to bear the horrific end of her beloved son.

From a Christian perspective, the choice of Jesus' parents should be considered God's most important decision after his call of Israel as "a light to the nations." It is unfortunate that the church has not saved any report on Joseph, Jesus' father. But this is more than made up by very significant narratives about his mother, Mary. In all of these reports, she appears as a woman of a humble social origin like most

women in her time. But her self-understanding carries a perspective that reflects the hopes and aspirations of her generation and nation: the coming of the Day of the Lord when the poor and lowly shall be filled and lifted up even as the proud and mighty shall be judged by God and brought down.

### I. Objectives

At the end of the session and with the consistent example shown by parents and other significant adults, the children will be able to:

1. identify Mary as Jesus' mother;
2. show appreciation of what could Mary have done as Jesus' mother; and
3. repeat actions of one's mother as she shows love and care for her children.

### II. Concept: Mary is called to be mother of Jesus.

**Materials:** *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), offering plate, song chart, cookies and candies, activity sheets

### III. Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Greet each child warmly and make them feel the atmosphere of home and love.
2. Please refer to the Advent liturgy.

#### B. Getting Ready

1. Teach the song "With Jesus in the Family"
2. Ask the children to describe their mothers? (Answers may vary. She's strong. She's loving. She's pretty. She smells good. Be sensitive to children who may no longer have mothers for whatever reason.)

#### C. Learning Time

1. Ask: "Do you know that Jesus has a mother too?" (Yes. Jesus had a mom too like anyone of us.) Let us find out in the story who is this mother of Jesus.
2. Tell the following story based on Luke 1:26-35. Tell the class to use the activity sheet.

#### Mary, Mother of Jesus

Mary is a kind and simple woman. She loves God very much. She is about to marry, Joseph. One fair day, an angel of God appears to Mary. He tells Mary that she will have a baby. Mary is surprised. She is also afraid.

But the Angel of the Lord tells her, "Do not be afraid. God loves you so much. God is pleased with you. Your baby will become a savior of all. You will name Him Jesus. He will become the greatest of all."

Mary asks the angel, "How can I be pregnant? I am not yet married to Joseph. The angel answers, "Do not worry, Mary. The Holy Spirit will come upon you. The power of God will cover you and the Son of God will be born through you."

#### D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Ask these questions.
  - a. Who is the mother of Jesus? (Mary)
  - b. Why was Mary chosen to be the mother of Jesus? (The Lord was pleased with her)
  - c. How did Mary show his love for Jesus? (By taking care of Him)
  - d. What is the name of your mother?



- e. How does your mother love and care for you?
  - f. Like Mary and our mothers, how can we also show love for others? (We can show love by caring for others. We can show love by helping others. We can show love by welcoming other kids. We can show love by sharing.)
2. Tell the class to do a pantomime of what their mothers do to them to show their love for them.

*E. Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Ask: "Who is the mother of Jesus? Who told her that she will be Jesus' mother? How did she show her love for Jesus?"

*F. Applying the Biblical Truth*

1. Teach the biblical verse.

**For N/K:** "Behold a young woman shall conceive and bear a son." (Isaiah 7:14)

**For YE:** "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.'" (Luke 1:35)

2. Tell the class to do these activities.

**For N/K:** I Care for You! Provide a small brown bag for each child and a poster note with "I Care for You". Tell them to paste the note on the front part of the bag. Let them get some goodies on the teacher's table and put them inside the bag. Tell the children to give it to other kids to show their love for them.

**For YE:** I Can Show Love! Tell the class to color the pictures that show love for others.

*G. Closing Worship*

1. Tell the learners to recite the memory verse.
2. Offering
3. Closing songs: "Many, Many Years Ago" and "With Jesus in the Family"
4. Closing prayer: "Dear God, thank you for this Sunday. Guide us today as we learn about Jesus' mother. Open our hearts that we may learn from Mary today. Thank you for the love of all our mothers. Help us to show our love and care for other children in this world. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen."

December 10, 2017

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent/Human Rights Sunday**

***Living under the Powers of Domination***

*Old Testament: Isaiah 9:2-5* (NRSV)

<sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. <sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest as people exult when dividing plunder. <sup>4</sup> For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. <sup>5</sup> For all the boots of the trampling warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

*New Testament: Luke 2:1-3* (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.

<sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered.

*General Concept: The family of Jesus lived under the dominating powers of the Roman Empire.*

*Key Concept: Jesus' family is poor.*

*Exegesis of the Biblical References*

This prophetic message of Isaiah is another assurance that God's protective guidance and power will be present in the midst of the threat of foreign invasion of Assyria. This prophetic pronouncement also tells of the situation which happened to the Northern Kingdom as it referred to the land of Naphtali and Zebulun in verse 1 being in a state of desolation and exile. The people from the Northern Kingdom is believed to be walking in darkness especially those who were left behind in the exile of the ruling elite of the north as reflected by the prophetic voice in the Southern Kingdom. Yet there is hope through the son who will be named as Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. This now reflects the chance of the remnants and even those who experienced exile from the northern kingdom to be liberated. This proclamation also shows the truth claim coming from the prophet that the southern kingdom will regain what once was lost; the United Kingdom of Israel will be restored and its people will experience the liberation of all the people of Israel from both the north and the south against the oppression of the threatening foreign invaders and empire. This prophetic pronouncement is also present in the New Testament as it is again reaffirmed in the coming of the expected messiah in the person of Jesus who is born in a time of imperial domination, that of the Roman Empire.

The narrative of the Gospel tells us of the historical context where the expected liberator from the imperial power will emerge. It is the time of the Roman Empire, when Augustus was the emperor who is also referred to by many historians as Octavius, who ruled from 23 BCE to his death in 14 CE. The activity of having a census is an indication that there were people who were not in their own land or place of origin. In Luke's narrative, Joseph was presently situated in Galilee and had to go back to Bethlehem because his ancestry is connected to David and in Bethlehem, they share the same birthplace. It was clearly a displacement due to the intervention of the imperial rule and the announced census was a royal policy imposition which reflects their subordination to the Roman Empire. This is one means of ensuring order in the perspective of the empire. This is Pax Romana or the peace seen from the Roman Empire's perspective. But the displacement of Joseph to his hometown was not really the kind of peace or the kind of order that was needed by the Jewish people where Joseph belonged. The present context in the Roman Empire was just an echo of the past experience in exile

and reflected in the necessary journey of Joseph to his hometown because of a royal census. This really gives us a picture of the emerging need of the people of Judah for real freedom from colonial control and impositions. This will eventually be answered by the following narrative of the same chapter, in the birth of a Savior and Liberator from imperial control.

### *Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users*

In Jesus' time, the shadow of the mighty Roman Empire was all-encompassing. It looms over the life and fate of every citizen and subject, including Jesus' family. The story of Jesus, from his birth in Bethlehem up to his execution outside the gates of Jerusalem, needs to be framed within the economic, social and political realities of the time for a historical understanding of his calling and ministry. The Jewish people were proud of their history. They were once a slave people who won their freedom from Egyptian slavery and carved out a new nation bound together by a new-found God named Yahweh. But for many generations they had only captivity and oppression. They had had short moments of liberation only to be ruled again and again by foreign aggressors. In Jesus' time, fresh hopes of liberation persisted.

Located at the periphery of the Roman Empire, Galilee was the specific geographical, social and political locus of Jesus' growing years. Many of the poor peasants from this area were recruited as workers for the Empire's building projects. It is likely that some of his friends and neighbors — and Joseph, Jesus' father who was known to be a carpenter — were among the labor recruits who worked under very harsh working conditions and were most of the time away from home. It was also known as a hotbed of Jewish resistance. At some points he might have flirted with the rebel cause. The fact that one of his disciples (Simon) was a Zealot, indicates that he was acquainted with insurgents in the area.

The Gospel records are clear that Jesus didn't join the insurgency movement. But more importantly, the political realities around him made a deep imprint on his self-understanding as Israel's messiah. He incorporated into his ministry the economic, social and political agenda of those who resisted Rome. He put them all under the rubric of the kingdom of God for which he was sent to proclaim. Jesus preached about the near coming of the messianic era which would be a faithful reflection of the heavenly realm. The authorities in Rome and Jerusalem rightly regarded him as a security threat since God's kingdom comprehends all things including the political realm. But that was the understatement of all time. Jesus' idea of his calling and ministry was beyond their imagination, even by his closest associates.

## **I. Objectives**

At the end of the session and with the consistent example shown by parents and other significant adults, the children will be able to:

1. begin to describe the life of Jesus as a member of a poor family;
2. begin to compare lives of families with many challenges with that of Jesus; and
3. display using artwork one's faith and trust in God with Jesus as the model who lives with many challenges.

## **II. Concept:** Jesus' family is poor.

**Materials:** *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), song chart, enlarged picture of the house of a typical family in Nazareth during Jesus' time

## **III. Learning Experiences**

### *A. Opening Worship*



1. Welcome time: Welcome the children as they come. Follow up with the children if you encouraged them to do something during the week.
2. Please refer to the Advent liturgy.

**B. Getting Ready**

1. Teach the song "With Jesus in the Family"
2. Ask the children to share something about their homes. Expect different answers and make sure they do not feel any discrimination on homes that show poverty.

**C. Learning Time**

1. *Motivation.* Say: "In our picture story, we will find out how Jesus' family lived in their home."
2. Present the picture in the activity sheets and let the children describe them. Draw the attention of the learners to it by saying that, "According to biblical scholars, this is what you may see inside a typical house in Nazareth during the time of Jesus. Perhaps, Jesus and his family lived in a house like this one."

**D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time**

1. Ask the following questions:
  - a. What do you notice about this house? (Small and cramped)
  - b. What is it made of? (Wood and stone)
  - c. Where do you think Jesus slept? (Upstairs) What do you think the rolled sheets are for? (Sleeping mats) Would you like to sleep on them? (Perhaps, "No" because they look uncomfortable)
  - d. What do you think the stairs are for? (To get to the rooms upstairs) Why do you think the stairs looked hard to climb?
  - e. Where do you think Jesus' family had meals? (Room in the middle because the jars for water are there)
  - f. Why were there jars in the rooms? (They had to fetch water because the house did not have water supply.)
  - g. Do you think Jesus had a rich family or a poor family? Why do you say so?

**Additional activity for YE**

2. Say: "Jesus' family was poor. Their home had only few household necessities. But his family always trusted God for help. Like Jesus' family, our family also faces challenges. Say these common challenges that most Filipino families face. If you think your family experiences it, jump once (or step forward):"

- a. Food is not enough.
- b. Dad or mom is always away.
- c. I have no 'baon' when I go to school.
- d. Our house does not give us enough comfort.
- e. We have no money to buy clothes.

**E. Discovering the Biblical Truth**

Ask: "What things show that Jesus' family is poor? What things show that some families are poor? What can we do to help them?"

**F. Applying the Biblical Truth**

**For N/K**

1. **Creative activity.** Distribute paper hats and tell the children that they are called TRUST hats. Provide materials such as pre-written lines: "In God, we trust." pair of scissors, and paste. Explain: "The hat is a symbol that the one wearing a hat is in control. Let's paste on it the line, "In God, we trust."

**For YE**

1. **Creative activity.** Tell the class that they will prepare a poster entitled "THUMB FAMILY Trusts God" Distribute these materials: stamp pad with ink or watercolor or food color, rag, pencil, and crayons. Instruct the class to do the following steps:
  - a. Give each child paper with the lines, "JUST TRUST. God provides."
  - b. Have each child press one's thumb on the stamp pad ink and press it again on the paper. Use the other finger pads to press more marks on the paper. Each mark represents a family member.
  - c. Outline each thumbmark and make it the head of each family member. Have the children draw the body.
  - d. Color the clothes.

**For NK/YE**

2. Talk *time*. Ask: "How should our family show our trust in God just as Jesus' family trusted God?" Lead the learners to say: "Our family shows our trust in God when:
  - a. We pray together.
  - b. We say, "God is in control."
  - c. We say, "God helps us find a way."
  - d. We say, "God is bigger than all our troubles."

**G. Closing Worship**

1. Memory verse:

**NK:** "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." (Isaiah 9:2a)

**YE:** "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined." (Isaiah 9:2)

2. Offering
3. Closing song: "Joy to the World" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey # 127)
4. Closing prayer: "Dear God, You are bigger than anything that could trouble us. You are stronger than anything that could harm us. You are mightier than any powerful enemy. We trust you completely! Amen."



December 17, 2017

**Third Sunday of Advent**

***The Ethnic and Historical Roots of Jesus***

*Old Testament: Genesis 17:1-8 [New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)]*

**The Sign of the Covenant**

'When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless.' <sup>2</sup>And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.' <sup>3</sup>Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, <sup>4</sup>'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>5</sup>No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations.

<sup>6</sup>I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. <sup>7</sup>I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. 'And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God.'

*New Testament: Matthew 1:1-17 (NRSV)*

**The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah**

'An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. <sup>2</sup>Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, <sup>3</sup>and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, <sup>4</sup>and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, <sup>5</sup>and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, <sup>6</sup>and Jesse the father of King David. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, <sup>7</sup>and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, <sup>10</sup>and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, <sup>11</sup>and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon: <sup>12</sup>And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, <sup>13</sup>and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, <sup>14</sup>and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Bud, <sup>15</sup>and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, <sup>16</sup>and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. <sup>17</sup>So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

**General Concept: Jesus is a child of history and of his times.**

**Key Concepts: Jesus is born.**

***Exegesis of the Biblical References***

Genesis 17:1-8 talks about the signs of promise of God to Abraham. It happened 13 years after the birth of Ishmael, Abraham's son to Hagar. Three signs of God's promise were noted in the event as

God appeared to Abraham; first, he shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations and even monarchs shall come from his ancestry. Second, his ancestry will establish the same covenant with God as promised first to Abraham. Third, Abraham and his ancestry will inherit the land of Canaan. It is in this context where God has established and renewed his covenant with Abraham. It is God who initiated it and not Abraham. The story before this covenant is also essential as it tells the story of Abraham having a son to Hagar. The covenant serves as a reminder to Abraham that God has not forgotten the promise to Abraham and Sarah to have a child, though Abraham and Sarah have already initiated their own plan in having a son through Hagar. But this was not the promise God has made to Abraham and Sarah. As will be seen in the following verses and chapters, these signs of promise are fulfilled through their son Isaac, then through Jacob and his descendants who went on to occupy the Land of Canaan. With their settlement there, they established the Tribal Confederacy and then the monarchy which is mentioned as among the signs of the covenant. Then there was the establishment of the Davidic and Solomonic monarchy. This was followed by the division and subsequent creation of the Southern Kingdom and Northern Kingdom. Eventually, both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms collapsed and their citizens thrown into exile. After the exile of the leaders of the southern kingdom they were able to return to Judah and rebuild the temple. There took place some revolts against their colonizers coming to the time of Jesus. This means that the covenant made by God is both given and renewed and remembered well at each moment. In the process of renewing and remembering God's covenant with them especially during times of festivals (e.g., Passover, Weeks, Tabernacles), God's faithfulness to God's covenant promises is always affirmed with rejoicing and gratitude. With God's covenant promise to Abraham being remembered, affirmed and celebrated throughout the time of his descendants until Jesus, his rootedness to the covenant remains upheld, affirmed and celebrated even in the present.

It is not a surprise why Matthew is the first book in the New Testament as it presents the link between the ancestry of the Old Testament heroes and the family of Jesus. Matthew 1:1-17 presents a picture of the genealogy of Jesus starting from Abraham to his immediate family, Joseph from the line of David. It is by his rootedness in the family of Abraham and his relationship to the fulfillment of the covenant which makes the gospel of Matthew a resource on how Jesus will respond to God's call to embody and fulfill the covenant made by God to God's people. The names which are included give us a picture of the historical significance and faith implications of how God has chosen the ancestors with their respective stories each of which has deep manifestations of faith such as Rahab's and Tamar's who were also recipients of the promise of God in spite of their questionable reputations along with the others. Matthew keeps the timeline in a way people can understand the faith tradition with a major historical undertaking. From this long line of ordinary, very human and even not so perfect lives of each of the ancestors comes the historical rootedness of Jesus and the distinct, concrete, caring mode of spirituality that he manifested in his life and ministry.

#### *Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users*

The concept of Christian spirituality is based on the doctrine of Christ's dual nature, namely, his true humanity and his true divinity that subsist in one unified personal center whose unique unity allows the exchange of properties between the two natures, in the language of classical Christian theology. In addition, the exchange of properties from one to the other does not in any way diminish or dilute the other, which is a paradox and a *sui generis*, that is, unique in the absolute sense of the word. This means that Christ is not any more human than we are and not any less God than God.

On that basis, believers of Jesus are called and destined to achieve the full stature of *human nature* by following his way, accepting his fate and being transformed by the power of the resurrection. Christian

spirituality is a *process of becoming like Jesus* which is both a struggle to follow his way and a passive experience of being renewed by the power of the Spirit. For Christian believers, spiritual formation is a life-long course in reenacting, individually and collectively, Jesus' concrete and historical life under the discipline of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul's description of Christian life as being *in Christ* refers to both in the resurrected and in the crucified Christ. In other words, the whole sequence of Jesus' Christhood — ministry-suffering-glorification — is contemplated in the meaning of being in Christ.

It follows that the course in Christian spirituality requires the members to *re-discover the human side of Jesus* by delving into his life and times — what kind of persons his parents were, the historical and social circumstances into which he was born, the cultural influences surrounding his childhood and the political forces that were at play which helped shape his consciousness. Jesus was not a *tabula rasa*, an empty slate, who instantly became the Christ but a person whose sense of identity resulted from an assimilation of the role models of his childhood and youth available in his time. The defining moment that thrust him into the role of Israel's messiah took place when, led by the Spirit, he prevailed over Satan and surrendered to God his whole being — his consciousness, his loves and hates, his personal ambitions, his politics and loyalties — and fate. This was also his moment of realization that he was chosen and prepared by God for a special purpose.

### I. Objectives

At the end of the session and with the consistent example shown by parents and other significant adults, the children will be able to:

1. begin to tell that Jesus is born;
2. begin to accept that Jesus is born as a human being like us; and
3. begin to talk about the joy of a child being born.

### II. Concept: Jesus is born.

**Materials:** *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), picture of Jesus' birth, baby dolls, baby stuff, cue cards, scavenger hunt box, activity sheets

### III. Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the children warmly as they arrive. Check the attendance.
2. Please refer to the Advent Liturgy.

#### B. Getting Ready

1. **Game Time.** Say: "Today, let's work in pairs. I will give each of you a picture of baby things. Look for the child who has the picture that goes with what you have. When you find your pair, sit together." Try to guide other children who are shy. Let the children answer the activity sheet made for this purpose. Expect the following answers.

soap and basin	booties and mittens
comb and mirror	pillow and blanket

2. Ask: "Who uses all these things?" Say: "In our story, find out who uses these things."

#### C. Learning Time

1. Teach the song "Many, Many Years Ago".
2. Tell the story.



### When Jesus Was a Baby

One early morning, baby Jesus wakes up. He starts to cry loudly. Mary checks on his diaper.

"Oh, it's wet!" she said. She changes his cloth diapers immediately.

Then, she carries him in her arms. She takes him near the window. Baby Jesus squints as he catches the morning sunshine on his face. The sweet scent of the field calms Jesus.

Joseph prepares a basin of warm water near the sink. Jesus takes a bath! Mary and Joseph take turns holding Jesus. They enjoy watching him bathe. They dress him in his tiny clothes. Mary combs his delicate hair until he falls asleep.

Suddenly, Joseph remembers how his forefathers, Abraham and David, took care of their family. Joseph promises God that he will continue caring for his family.

#### D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask the following questions:

1. In the story, who uses the things that we talked about earlier?
2. Who took care of Jesus when he was born?
3. Pretend that you are Mary. How do you take care of Baby Jesus? What would you do if:
  - a. Jesus cries.
  - b. Jesus needs sunshine.
  - c. Jesus is hungry.
4. Pretend that you are Joseph. How do you take care of Baby Jesus? What would you do if:
  - a. Jesus needs a bath.
  - b. Jesus feels cold.
5. Aside from crying, what do babies do when they are born? (Call on each pupil to show before the class to act out what babies do. Have the class guess what each pupil tries to show the class.)

#### E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

1. Ask: How was Jesus like when he was a baby? Learners can say: Jesus was born to a family. He had a mother and a father. His parents cared for him.
2. Ask: What did Jesus need when he was a baby? Learners can say: Jesus needed clothing, food and sunshine. He needed his parents to look after him.
3. Ask: How was Jesus like us when he was a baby? Learners can say: Jesus had a family like ours. Jesus needed clothing, food, fresh air, and sunshine like we do. Jesus also cried like most babies do.

#### F Applying the Biblical Truth

##### For N/K

1. Play 'Dress Up Jesus'. How do you feel if you were given the chance to put clothes on Baby Jesus. What items would you use to clothe Him? (In the Scavenger Hunt Box, put things that a baby boy could likely wear such as mittens, booties, small shirt, bib, small jumper, small jacket, small brief and other nuisance items like big shirt and shorts, and

clothes for girls.)

- a. Teacher holds a baby doll. Teacher says, "Let's pretend that this is baby Jesus."
  - b. Call on a pupil to "hunt" in the box for one thing that baby Jesus could wear. Have each child experience the act of putting clothes on the doll.
2. Say: Thank you all for helping me. This baby will definitely will grow strong and healthy.

#### For YE

1. *The Joy of Caring for a Baby.* Say: Like Jesus, we were born and we were once babies, too. In the family of Joseph and Mary, the birth of Jesus brought them so much. It is always a joy to care for a baby in one's family. Who among you can help me take care of the baby. Find something in the scavenger box what the baby needs. (In the Scavenger Hunt Box, put things like baby bottle, a toy, a fan, a small pillow, a nail cutter, a comb, and a diaper.)
  - a. This baby is crying so loud. He is hungry.
  - b. This baby wants to play.
  - c. This baby wants to sleep.
  - d. This baby feels hot. She sweats.
  - e. This baby's nails need to be cut. They're already long.
2. *Art activity.* Complete the baby picture. Draw the missing part of this baby and color the completed picture.

#### G. Closing Worship

1. Memory verse: "And Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah." (Matthew 1:16)
2. Reflective action: We thank God for Jesus who was born. (Clap three times)
3. Offering
4. Closing songs "Joy to the World" and "Many, Many Years Ago"
5. Closing prayer: Thank you God for baby Jesus who was born like us. May we continue to make Jesus happy as we take care of our brothers and sisters, too. Amen."

December 24, 2017

**Fourth Sunday of Advent**

***The Birth of Jesus***

***Old Testament: Isaiah 9:6-7 (NRSV)***

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

***New Testament: Luke 2:4-7 (NRSV)***

<sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

***General Concept: Being born among the lowly, Jesus shared their aspirations to bring about a new era of shared prosperity, justice and peace.***

***Key Concept: Jesus is a gift from God. We welcome Jesus with a joyful heart.***

***Exegesis of the Biblical References***

The proclamation of Isaiah about the child or the son who is going to be born as the sign of the savior messiah is a strong prophetic claim with a vivid picture of hope for a people on the verge of hopelessness. This messiah-child shall be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. This announcement is enough for one to say that the coming messiah is a powerful liberator and leader who has authority resting upon his shoulders.

This pronouncement also articulates the hope where both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms will again be united after it has been divided for about two hundred years already. The realization of this hope will come from the south as originally promised by Yahweh to King David (2 Samuel 7:12-13) and reiterated to Solomon (1 Kings 9:5) before the events that led to the tragic division of the kingdom and even to the event of exile of the Northern Kingdom in 721 BCE.

Isaiah echoes the call for a new chapter and a new undertaking in the history of God's people which will be beneficial for the people of both the North and the South. The prophecy also confesses the power of this Messiah or Savior to defeat the enemies and to create an everlasting peace which cannot be compared with the kind of peace brought and offered by the foreign rulers and empires wanting to dominate them. The peace or shalom referred to by Isaiah is different from the peace of the empire; for the peace of the empire means just plain passive subordination to the will of the empire or the foreign ruler but in shalom, peace is referred to as the implementation of justice which, according to the Mosaic and Deuteronomic teaching, refers to responding to and prioritizing the needs of the poor, the oppressed and the widow and defending and upholding their basic rights as fellow children of God (cf. Deut. 10:17-19; 16:20). Justice also is not just a political term for being a quiet follower of the ruler but it is a state of being where needs are met especially of those people who are in great and desperate need. This is the work of the messiah: to implement justice and peace to the established kingdom. The persistent struggle for justice and real peace is clearly one of the signs or marks of the true Messiah (cf.



Ps. 72:1-4).

The birth of Christ took place in a manger. This is because there is no more place for them in the inn or any lodging place then in Bethlehem when Joseph and Mary arrived there for Joseph to register in compliance to the imperial imposition of a census. This shows the extreme overcrowding of the city with the returning natives there. The reality was that it was very difficult to find a place to stay there anymore. If the socio-economic conditions will be examined at this point, then it might be observed that the needs of those in the margins such as Mary and Joseph were not met because of the serious lack of lodging facilities in the city.

The reference to the manger can also speak of the humble beginnings of Jesus of Nazareth yet it also speaks strongly of the reality of the economic and social conditions where Jesus was born. The simple and straightforward narrative of the homelessness of Jesus and his being wrapped only in swaddling clothes reminds the readers of the very lowly character of the birth of Jesus. This reality also reflects the typical situation of ordinary people in ordinary times under the reign of the Roman Empire. Nothing is so special among the ordinary because it presents the picture of a typical response of the empire to the plight and hardships of ordinary people; nothing.

This part of Luke's narrative is a prelude for the present readers of the gospel to a situation where an old reality will be confronted with the new especially in terms of the people's situation under imperial control. It speaks of a coming Savior who knew what it meant living in the shadows of the Roman Empire and its effect on the life expectations of each individual living in the same condition.

This is where Jesus comes embodying an entirely new reality. He is now coming standing in solidarity with the suffering and struggles of the hopeless in their social, economic, political and spiritual situation, a situation which further consigns them to further destitution and marginalization and the continuing loss of hope for a better future. This is where Jesus' birth as savior of his people will be recognized as truly the beginning of a radically new messianic age embodied clearly in his forthcoming ministry that will eventually lead him to the cross.

#### *Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users*

Jesus' entry into the scene was inauspicious, to say the least. Luke's story about the visit of a group of shepherds, however, shows his birth as a great cosmic event participated in by a heavenly host. The presence of lowly shepherds and heavenly angels shrouds Jesus' birth in a mystery that would be unlocked only at this death and resurrection. Until then, Jesus grew up an ordinary child of ordinary parents among ordinary people.

This kind of narrative stands in sharp contrast to the dominant narratives that trace the beginnings of historic personalities in the royal cradle. Even the biblical writers saw it fit to connect the humble beginnings of Moses and Jesus to a royal origin. Moses was the son of Hebrew slaves but grew up under the care of an Egyptian princess. Jesus was born of poor parents but in reality he descended from the line of David, Israel's greatest king in consonance with the prophecies about the coming of a kingly messiah. But in God's great plan of salvation, Jesus was not meant to be raised a king. Why was God's messiah born a commoner? This is a clear judgment on the rich and powerful. They can't serve as messiah because they don't and won't accept the vocation of messiah as intended by God in that salvation includes deliverance from material bondage. This was proven when Jesus challenged the rich young ruler to be a messiah to the poor, which he sadly declined because he was very rich. It's

not that God doesn't call the rich but that the rich reject the messianic calling. They would rather that they defined the role of messiah in their own terms. Jesus was born into a circumstance where responding to God's call coincided with his raging anger against evil in all its forms and with his burning desire to save his people even at the cost of his life. There were other messianic figures from Jesus' own social background with perhaps the same intensity of love for the nation but for one reason or another they failed to grasp God's plan of salvation as Jesus did. In choosing Jesus, an ordinary person, God let known to the world the nature and scope of salvation.

### I. Objectives

At the end of the session and with the consistent example shown by parents and other significant adults, the children will be able to:

1. begin to accept that Jesus was born as a gift to us;
2. begin to be aware that children are gifts of God to their parents;
3. begin to talk about the purpose of God for us; and
4. retell the Christmas story as children see it.

### II. Concept: Jesus is a gift from God. We welcome Jesus with a joyful heart.

**Materials:** *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), manger, activity sheets, small white paper plate, stapler, a simple drawing of a baby face, string or yarn, puncher

### III. Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet each child and ask them to see the set up of the manger using recycled materials.
2. Please refer to the Advent Liturgy.

#### B. Getting Ready

1. Let the children sit together. Ask them what they call what the teacher is holding. (A gift) Encourage them to describe a gift (something that is freely given) and who among them wants to receive a gift. (Every one).
2. Tell the class to play the game "Pass the Gift". Let the children form a circle and ask them to sit down. Give the box to one child and instruct him or her to pass the gift as soon as the music starts. When the music stops, the one who holds the box last can take a look at what's inside it. Do this three times and let the three winners stand in front.
3. Ask the three winners: "How did you feel when you received a gift?" Ask the other children: "How do you feel when you receive the gift? How do you feel when you did not receive a gift?"

#### C. Learning Time

1. *Motivation.* Say: "Let us find out in the story God's gift to us."
2. Present the story. Instruct the class to look at the activity sheets.

#### **Jesus, God's Gift for Us!**

(Based on Luke 2:1-20)

Joseph and Mary have to be counted. They walk a long trip towards Bethlehem. But, Mary rides a donkey because she is about to give birth. They reach Bethlehem and have to stay in the only available place—the barn. It is a beautiful night. Mary gives birth to Jesus. Joseph and Mary are very happy. They know Jesus is a precious gift to them. They wrap him with cloth. They put him in the manger and lay Jesus there.

On the same night, the shepherds are quietly watching their sheep. All of a sudden, the

angels appear. They are singing, "Glory to God in the highest! Peace on Earth, Goodwill to all!" Then, they tell the shepherds, "Go to Bethlehem because Jesus is born. He is wrapped in cloth and sleeping in a manger." Immediately, the shepherds run away to see Jesus. They are so happy. As they leave the barn, they start to praise and thank God for God's gift to us—Jesus.

#### *D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time*

Ask the following questions:

1. Do you know that God has a special gift for us? (Yes)
2. Who is God's special gift to us? (Jesus)
3. Why do you say that Jesus is a gift from God? (Jesus came to save us.)
4. What do you think Jesus looked like when he was a baby? (He looks like other babies—tiny.)
5. How did Mary and Joseph feel when they saw baby Jesus? (They felt happy.)
6. How did the shepherds know about Jesus? (The angels told them.)
7. What did the shepherds do when they saw baby Jesus? (They were happy. They praised and thanked God for giving Jesus to us.)
8. Who are God's gifts to the parents? (Children are gifts of God to their parents.)

#### *E. Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Ask: "Who is God's special gift to us?" (Jesus) "Why do you think we are God's special gifts to our parents?" (Like Jesus, God has a purpose for us.)

#### *F. Applying the Biblical Truth*

1. Tell the children to jump three times and say "yes" to acknowledge that they are God's gift to their parents. Ask what is God's purpose for us. Lead them to say: "To bring joy to our parents; To show love for others; To obey and please God." Etc.

2. Teach the memory verse.

**For N/K:** "For a child has been born for us... and He is named Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

**For YE:** "For a child has been born to us, and He is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

3. Creative activity

a. **For N/K:** Tell the children to make a picture pocket. Provide each child a paper plate with two punched holes (about 3 inches apart) at the top part, a piece of paper (sticker is preferable) with these sentences (Jesus is a gift from God to us. I am a gift from God to my parents.) a piece of string, and glue if needed. As a preassigned task, tell each child to bring two baby pictures.

- 1) Fold both sides of the plate leaving a space at the center to see. Fold the bottom part to cover the two folded sides to make a pocket.
- 2) Tie the plate using the two punched holes on top. Paste or glue the piece of paper on the front part of the pocket. Decorate your picture holder. Insert your first baby picture. Let the children complete the frame in the activity sheet using the other baby picture.
- 3) Tell the class to stand and show their work. Lead them to say the sentences written on



their picture pockets.

- c. **For YE:** Provide each child with the activity sheet that shows the outline of the family of Jesus. Tell the class to connect the numbers 1 to 55. Then let them decorate their work.

G. *Closing Worship*

1. Tell the children to recite the memory verse.
2. Reflective action: *I will share the love of Jesus to others.*
3. Offering
4. Closing songs: "When Jesus Was" and "O Come, All You Faithful" (HFJ # 135)
5. Closing prayer: "Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus to us. Thank you for sending us to our parents as a gift. Help us to do your purpose for us like your son, Jesus. Amen."



December 31, 2017

**First Sunday after Christmas**

***Announcing Jesus' Ministry***

*Old Testament: 1 Samuel 2:1-10 (NRSV)*

Hannah's Prayer

'Hannah prayed and said, 'My heart exults in the LORD; my strength is exalted in my God. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in my victory. <sup>2</sup>There is no Holy One like the LORD, no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. <sup>3</sup>Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. <sup>4</sup>The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength. <sup>5</sup>Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. 'The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. <sup>7</sup>The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts. <sup>8</sup>He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and on them he has set the world. <sup>9</sup>He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness; for not by might does one prevail. <sup>10</sup>The LORD! His adversaries shall be shattered; the Most High will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king, and exalt the power of his anointed.'

*New Testament: Luke 1:46-53 (NRSV)*

Mary's Song of Praise

<sup>46</sup>And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, <sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, <sup>48</sup>for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; <sup>49</sup>for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. <sup>50</sup>His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. <sup>51</sup>He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. <sup>52</sup>He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; <sup>53</sup>he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

***General Concept: Jesus imbibed his mother's character and standpoint towards the world.***

***Key Concepts: Jesus learned about faith in God through Mary.***

*Exegesis of the Biblical References*

Both a prayer and a song, the text speaks of the joy of Hannah when she received the favor from the Lord to have a son although she promised that the child named Samuel would be in the service of the temple. Thus, Hannah still prayed with joy and praised God's magnificent and awesome power to work wonders even in the midst of impossibility and even in times that are confronted by the wicked oppositions in life by various hostile forces. She proclaimed God as sovereign and having full control of every situation even if it may be perceived as almost hopeless.

God will make things possible in favor of the good and not of the evil. Hannah also reflects the picture of a woman who has a deep sense of belief in a God who will take the side and hears the prayers of the oppressed, as in her case, being barren which had been answered. In this sense her voice becomes the voice of all women who are in a similar situation, the socially rejected and despised ones because of their barrenness or inability to bear children for their husbands. Thus, this will now serve as a strong evidence that God is not deaf nor insensitive to the aspirations of those who feel ignored and belittled and dishonored on account of their handicapped situation. This song of triumph may be seen as a light at the

end of a long, dark tunnel.

This prayer and song is also similar to Mary's song when Gabriel announced the birth of the Savior Jesus at a time when it appears to be a difficult if not an impossible prospect to accomplish. Yet, Mary's song is a positive one where it speaks of the unspoken aspirations of the oppressed and the outcast, similar to the song and prayer of Hannah.

The song of Mary, better known as the Magnificat, can be an affirmation of the faith of Mary to a God whom she along with others in the margins believe to be working to bring change to the life of those in the margins and the oppressed. The Magnificat is an acclamation to the God who will bring about a radical change and a 180-degree turn to what is presently experienced by Mary and the others who also feel the burdens of the oppressed, poor and marginalized people of the land. Mary as a simple, countryside resident has expressed in a highly poetic language the thoughts and values of a simple, ordinary person who has nothing in life but an abundance of faith and trust in the Lord the God of her people.

It might be that the experience is completely real to her and she is one with those who experienced so much deprivation and insufficiencies in life, especially in economic sustenance, security and social standing. She sings a song that holds no bar; a frank reflection on the realities, contradictions and inequalities in life and the deep faith on how God will intervene to reverse things in the social and political realms. This could also indicate to us how Jesus can also be identified with the marginalized because Mary as Jesus' mother had taught her the realities of life and its contradictions, the enormous gap between the powerful and the powerless, the rich living in enormous luxury whose dinner tables are always full of bounties taken from the deeply exploited farmers and the poor of the land simply surviving in utter destitution. But she also imparted to him her deep and unshakeable faith in God who will change things and transform it all.

She considered her calling and task to be the mother of Jesus as a blessing and honor for her because she has become the bearer and mother of the Christ, the Savior. It is no surprise that Jesus grew up wholeheartedly sharing the same values, the same faith perspective and deep belief and trust in God, the same view of life and reality and in how God will transform and even reverse such realities of life in favor of the weak, the powerless and victimized ones in society.

#### *Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users*

Already before Jesus' birth, his mother had an insight into God's design for the salvation of her people. At this point, she may not have grasped its full scope and consequences but she understood that God's choice of her was an affirmation of who she was and her aspirations in life: the ascendancy of the lowly and poor in God's kingdom over and against the rule of the rich and powerful. It was her son Jesus who would be God's instrument to realize the historical longings and hopes of the poor in the kingdom of God. Mary resolved that she would bring up Jesus in the ways of the messiah as intended by God.

In view of Jesus' pronouncements during his ministry, one may reconstruct his early education with some degree of accuracy. Most likely, Mary introduced the young Jesus to the traditions and history of the Jewish faith — the Law and the Prophets. It was through Mary's early instruction at home that Jesus learned to love learning with the other children at the feet of the rabbis at the synagogue. These teachers were, however, part of the Jewish establishment that collaborated with colonial Rome. Fearful of the Roman authorities in Jerusalem, the instructions that they gave emphasized



the legalistic interpretation of the law and intentionally glossed over the implications of the Exodus event and the prophetic lure to the current situation. This might have planted the seeds of distrust and contempt for the rabbinical approach to education and to the institution itself headed by the scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus also got additional instructions from his mother and older neighbors in Nazareth of Galilee about the people's history of resistance to various occupying forces, particularly Roman. The story of Galileans crucified for rebellion by order of Pontius Pilate must still be fresh in Jesus' mind and of the people in the area. Most likely, there were rebels going around at night educating the younger residents and recruiting them to the revolutionary movement.

There were two kinds of instruction that Jesus went through. One was at the synagogue under the rabbis; the other took place in the night. Jesus was likely a devout Jew who wished to be faithful to his faith-traditions. At the same time, he might find his instruction at night quite compelling and inspiring. Jesus did not rush to make a career decision but took time, rather late, when he got to be about thirty. Perhaps, he let it percolate in his mind for a while and waited for the right time — the moment of his struggle with the Devil in the wilderness. He resolved to bring the two together: the hope for the national and social liberation of his people coincided with the good news of the kingdom of God. He decided to follow John the Baptist, a preacher of the kingdom and an uncompromising critique of the political rulers.

Mary may have supported Jesus' decision not to be a "normal" Jew — take up a trade, settle down, assume leadership in the community. But she had had no inkling, however, that her son would end up on the cross, much less of his resurrection and elevation to judge humankind on the Day of the Lord. It's likely that together with her younger son James she would join the church in Jerusalem following Jesus' resurrection.

## I. Objectives

At the end of the session and with the consistent example shown by parents and other significant adults, the children will be able to:

1. begin to identify Jesus' mother as His first teacher in the Jewish faith;
2. begin to recognize the first teachers in Christian faith; and
3. begin to express appreciation for one's teachers in faith.

## II. Concept: Jesus learned about faith in God through Mary.

**Materials:** *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), picture of Mary teaching Jesus, enlarged pictures of Mary and Jesus doing things together, song chart, memory verse chart

## III. Learning Experiences

### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet each child and check the attendance
2. Teach the song "Love God" and review the other songs learned in the previous lessons.
3. Opening prayer: "Dear God, we praise you today. Thank you for being with us. Guide us as we talk about how Mary taught her son Jesus about their faith. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

### B. Getting Ready

1. Tell the children to play the game "Charade". Write each of these action words on a piece of

paper.

Reading

Washing dishes

Listening

Sweeping

Praying

Singing

Feeding animals

Dancing

2. Fold the paper. Put inside a box. Call on a pupil to get a piece of paper and to act out what is written on it. Tell the other children to guess.
3. Talk time. Ask:
  - a. Who teaches you to read?
  - b. Who teaches you to pray?
  - c. Who teaches you to sing?
  - d. Who teaches you to sweep the floor?

### C. Learning Time

1. Say: "In our story today, find out who teaches Jesus to do these things."
2. Talk about the picture before reading the story.

#### "Mary Teaches Jesus"

One afternoon while sitting in the living room, Mary asked Jesus, "Did you clean all the dishes?"

"Yes, Mother!" Jesus answered.

"How about our doves? Did you feed them already?" Mary checked.

"Of course, Mother!" Jesus replied while smiling.

"Good. You are really obedient, Jesus," his mother praised him.

Then, Mary invited Jesus, "Come, sit by me. Let's recite the Shema Israel again like you did this morning. Cover your eyes with your right hand."

Together they recited,

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God. The Lord is One.

Blessed be the name of the glory of God's kingdom forever and ever."

Jesus continued on the long recitation following as his mother led him.

### D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Ask these questions.
  - a. Who taught Jesus to pray? (Mary)
  - b. What did Jesus and his mother recite together? (the Shema Israel)
2. Tell the class to talk about the pictures in the activity sheet that show what Jesus' day was like (4 given pictures as shown in the activity sheet).
3. *Sharing.* Have the learners take turns in telling the activities of Jesus for that day using the given pictures.

### E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: 'Who was Jesus' first teacher? (His mother, Mary) Who teaches you to pray, sing and know stories about God? (Parents, Sunday school teacher) What else did he or she teach you how to love God?

Say: Jesus continued to grow in his faith with the guidance of his mother. Mary was Jesus' first teacher. We also grow in God's love as our parents teach us about our faith. Our Sunday school teacher and our pastor also help us grow in our faith.

**F Applying the Biblical Truth**

1. Teach the memory verses.

**For N/K:** "My soul magnifies the Lord." (Luke 1:46)

**For YE:** "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God." (Luke 1:46-47a)

**For N/K**

2. *Creative activity.* Tell the class to complete the picture and color it. (Activity sheet)
3. Sharing: After coloring, have the learners declare, "Mary is the first teacher of Jesus." Have them share what Mary taught Jesus. For Example, "Mary taught Jesus to pray. Mary taught Jesus to sing praises to God."

**For YE**

2. *Creative activity.* Let the children look at the different parts shown in the activity sheet. Tell them to cut the parts and paste them together to show mother and child. Ask them to decorate their artwork.
3. Encourage the children to say, "Thank you for helping me grow in God's love."

**G. Closing Worship**

1. Let the children recite the memory verse.
2. Offering: Remind the children that as they give their gifts joyfully they are also thanking God.
3. Closing songs: "Many Many Years Ago"; and "When Jesus Was a Baby Boy"
4. Closing prayer: Our Lord God, we thank you for letting us know that Jesus was once like us—needing the nurturing hands of his mother, Mary. Thank you for our own teachers in faith - our parents, our Sunday School teacher and our pastor. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

