



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

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

Season: ***Advent and Christmastide***

Age Level: ***Middle and Older Elementary***

December 3, 2017

1st Sunday in Advent/Family Sunday

The Call of Mary

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

¹⁴Therefore 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

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

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, the children are expected to:

1. identify Mary as Jesus' mother;
2. explain that Mary was called to be mother of Jesus;
3. accept the fact that people are called by God for a purpose; and
4. express one's acceptance to God's call to us through a poster.

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

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), activity sheet, crayons, song chart, pencils, paper or cartolina

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: 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. Instruct the learners to get ready to play the game "I Say.. You Do..." Tell them to form a big circle. Put a crown to act like a king. Give them the things that learners will do as written on a strip of paper. The learners will do what is told. Ask them to come forward.
 - a. Those whose name has letter "a", jump five times forward and five times backward.
 - b. Those who are in fifth grade say this twice: "She sells seashells in the seashore."
 - c. Those who are wearing black shoes, dance with your own music.
 - d. Those who are wearing pants, make seven baby steps to the door.
 - e. Those who are wearing red, recite last Sunday's memory verse together.
 - f. Those whose surname has letter "e", play rock, scissors and paper.
 - g. Those who attended last Sunday, sing "I Have Two Hands" with action.
 - h. The person who has the longest hair, lead the closing prayer later.
 - i. Those who has coins/ bills in their pocket or wallet, clap ten times.
 - j. Those who are December celebrants, please stay to arrange our room later.
2. After the game, ask: When you were called to do the task, how did you respond? How do you observe those who did the task?
3. Tell the class to recall a character in the Bible who was called by God to do a task.

C. Learning Time

1. Say: "Like in our game, God calls people to do a certain task. One of those people called is Mary. Mary is called by God to be the mother of Jesus. Let's find out in the story how Mary accepted her call to be the mother of Jesus."
2. Group the class into two. Assign each group to play the Angel Gabriel and Mary. When they see the character in the story, ask them to stand together and say the lines of their character aloud. Assign somebody to be the narrator.
3. Present the story. Tell the class to use the activity sheet.

The Call of Mary

(Based from Luke 1: 26-35)

It was in the sixth month. God sent an angel to a town called Nazareth in Galilee. He appeared to Mary who was about to marry Joseph, from the house of David. The angel of God told her not to be afraid for He has good news.

"Mary, you will conceive in you womb and bear a son. You will call him Jesus. He will be great and be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestors David and reign forever,"

But, Mary asked, "How can this be? I am a virgin."

The angel of God replied: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most Holy High will overshadow; He will be called the son of God."

"I am God's servant. Let God's will be done upon me," Mary said.

Then the angel of God departed.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Discuss the text and the story by answering the following questions:
 - a. What was Angel Gabriel's good news to Mary? (Mary will give birth to God's son.)
 - b. How did Mary respond to God's call? (Mary humbly accepted the call of God.)
 - c. Why do you think God chose Mary to be Jesus' mother? (Mary loves God. She is devoted and faithful to God. She will definitely take care of God's Son very well.)
2. Say: "Like Mary, God calls us to do things. Why? (Everyone is called to do things to honor God.) Let the class give ways of honoring God in the following places. Expect different answers."
 - a. At home (Obey our parents.)
 - b. In school (Study faithfully. Be a good friend.)
 - c. In church (Worship God and love our fellow believers.)
 - d. In the community...

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: "Mary is called by God to be the mother of Jesus. Mary accepted the call with all her heart." Ask: How did Mary take care of Jesus? How do our parents take care of us as they are called by God to be our parents?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the biblical verse.

For ME: "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)

For OE: "The angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:30-33)

2. Tell the class to do these activities.

For ME: *Poster making.* Provide recyclable materials to the class and tell the learners to express their acceptance of God's call through a poster. (See *Teaching Aid*)

For OE: *Writing one's thoughts.* The Bible Says... I Say... (See *Teaching Aid*)

G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse.

2. Offering

3. Reflective action: "I will do what is right when called upon to do something."

4. Closing songs:

"What Child is This?" *Hymnal of a Faith Journey* #138

"Silent Night! Holy Night!" (by Franz Gruber, 1818, *Hymnal of a Faith Journey* # 129)

5. Closing prayer: "Dear God, thank you for calling each of one us to work with you. Like Mary, help us to accept Your call for us. You have called us to show love, kindness and care for one another. Help us to respond to your call with all our heart. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

December 10, 2017

2nd Sunday in Advent/Human Rights Sunday

Living under the Powers of Domination

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

² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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)

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

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

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

Key Concepts: Jesus' family lives in a poor community.

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, the learners are expected to:

1. describe the life of Jesus coming from a poor community;
2. compare the lives of families in poor communities with many challenges similar to that of Jesus; and
3. display one's faith and trust in God with Jesus as the model.

II. Concept: Jesus' family lives in a poor community.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), song chart, pencil & paper, strips of bond paper (12"x2"), glue,

cartolina

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. Invite a child to lead the opening prayer.
2. Please refer to the Advent Liturgy.

B. Getting Ready

1. Tell the class to look at the pictures of Jewish homes. Let them give their observations.
2. *Pair work.* Have the group work in dyads or pairs.
 - a. Tell each pair to choose one picture and to list down 3-5 questions that they want to ask so they would know more about how the child Jesus lived. Tell them to pay attention to the details in the pictures like the stairs, jars and the details that are not in the picture such as tables, chairs and washroom.
 - b. Have the pairs that worked on picture 1 exchange their list with a pair that worked on picture 2.
 - c. Tell the pairs to share their answers to the class.
3. Lead the group to conclude that:
 - a. Jesus lived in a home with few necessities,
 - b. The people in Jesus' neighborhood lived very much like how Jesus lived.

C. Learning Time

1. *Motivation.* Say: "Let's try to go back during Jesus time. This story is an attempt to infer how Jesus perhaps related to a neighbor close to Him.
2. Present the story. Tell the class to use the activity sheets.

Andrew, Why are you Sad?

Late one morning, as Jesus washes the dishes, he sees his friend Andrew from their window. Andrew seems sad as he sits on the doorstep of their house. "Andrew," Jesus shouts. "Why are you sad?" he asks.

"We are hungry. Father hasn't come home yet from fishing. I hope he is fine," Andrew answered.

"Is that so? Wait for a while." Jesus says.

Jesus runs towards his mother who is busily mending clothes. Jesus tells her mother about Andrew. Then, Mary asks Jesus to share their leftover bread in the cupboard and some bananas in the brown basket.

"Here! Take these," Jesus offers. "I'm sure your father will arrive soon for lunch. He will bring food for all of you. Just wait and see. God is good. God will keep your father safe. Trust God!" Jesus assures Andrew.

Andrew's face brightens. "Thank you, Jesus. My mother and my siblings will be happy. Yes, We trust God. Father told me to pray every time," Andrew replies. Jesus returns home with a happy heart.

*D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time***For ME**

1. *Retelling.* Tell the class that all stories have parts such as the beginning, problem, solution, and ending. Call on four participants to retell these parts. These sentence cues may be used to prompt responses:

In the beginning, _____

The problem was _____

To solve this, _____

In the end, _____

For OE

2. *Making comparisons.* Write this table on a sheet of manila paper. Leave the second and third columns for the participants to complete. Identify the economic hardships experienced during Jesus' time and compare them with what we experience in our present time.

Challenges experienced	Poor communities in Jesus' times	Poor communities now
Food	(People experienced lack of food)	(There are people who experience hunger.)
Houses	(Houses were cramped. Some people lived in the streets.)	(Poor people still live in slum areas where they have very little necessities.)
Health	(Sick people did not get treatment.)	(We have hospitals, but poor people cannot afford them.)

3. *Making interpretation.* Ask: How do you compare the two conditions in the table?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "How do you think Jesus and his family felt as they lived in a poor community? How do you think poor families in our communities feel?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Say: "In the story, Andrew trusted the Lord to provide for his family's immediate needs. Jesus responded by sharing what his family had. At present, some people also have challenges similar to those experienced by Jesus."
2. Call on a participant to tell a story of how he or she has experienced trusting God in providing for his or her needs. Call on another participant whom God used to help someone in need.
3. Lead the class to realize that God provides for our needs. God is always with us. God uses us to help someone in need in the same way Jesus was used to help those in

need.

4. Help the class to make a chain of words of trust. Say: "Trusting God whom we cannot see or hear is always challenging. However, we do know that God is always with us because God always delivers us from our difficulties. If it seems that God keeps us in challenging situations, God has a plan for us."
5. Form two groups. Give each group strips of paper on which to write other ways to say, "We trust God" such as:
God is in control.
God helps us find a way.
God is bigger than all our troubles.
Lead me, Lord!
God shows the way.
God has the perfect plan.
God has the most perfect timing.
6. Evaluate the chains that the class has prepared. The group that has the longest chain wins the game.

G. Closing Worship

1. Memory verse: The people who walked in darkness have seen the light; who live in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined. Isaiah: 9:2
2. Reflective action: I will always trust God.
3. Offering
4. Closing song: "Sumabog ang Balita" (*Hymnal of a Faith Journey* # 141) and "Joy to the World" (*Hymnal of a Faith Journey* # 127)
5. Closing prayer: "Almighty God, we surrender to you all that we have and all that we are. 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. ²And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.' ³Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ⁴'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations.

⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷I 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. ²Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, ⁴and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶and Jesse the father of King David. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, ⁷and 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, ¹⁰and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, ¹¹and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon: ¹²And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, ¹⁴and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Bud, ¹⁵and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. ¹⁷So 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, the learners are expected to:

1. describe Jesus as one who is born to a Jewish family;
2. talk about his parents;
3. practice being obedient to one's parents as Jesus was to his parents; and
4. express one's thanks to God for giving us families.

II. Concept: Jesus belongs to a Jewish family.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), pictures of Jesus' birth, pictures of different families, e.g., Jewish, Filipino, Chinese, American

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the children as they come.
2. Please refer to the Advent Liturgy.

B. Getting Ready

1. *Family tree.* On a chalkboard or a manila paper, teacher presents his or her family tree. Say that a family tree shows the people who are related to us.
2. *Make your own family tree.* Have the pupils draw their own family tree.
3. *Talk time.* Ask: How many persons are related to you? Do you have a big or small family?

C. Learning Time

1. Say: "Let us read more about Jesus' family. Find out who are the other members of his

- family." Ask: "Can I have volunteers who can read the dialog between the characters?" (Write the story in a manila paper for oral reading among learners.)
2. Present the story in the activity sheet. You can enrich this activity by calling pupils who can do responsive reading of the characters.

At Family's Dinner

It was dinnertime. All of Jesus' family was seated at the table. As they started eating, Jesus became curious about Abraham and David.

Jesus: Father, what do you know about Grandfather Abraham?

Joseph: He was a righteous man. God made a covenant with him.

Jesus: What is a covenant?

Mary: It is an agreement between two parties, God and Moses.

Joseph: Just like this. Finish your vegetables and I will make you a wooden horse later.

Jesus: You will? Oh boy! Thank you, Father. What did God and Abraham agree to do?

Joseph: Abraham must worship only God and nothing else...

Mary: ... for God will multiply Abraham's descendants as many as the stars in heaven. God will make Abraham's family a great nation and bless him with land to live. We are Abraham's descendants, Jesus. As many as the stars in heaven!

Jesus: Oh that's really a lot. Are Uncle Zechariah, Aunt Elizabeth and Cousin John also included?

Mary: Yes, they are!

Jesus: How about King David?

Joseph: Yes, he is also your grandfather. Before he became king, he was then a young shepherd who, with God's help, defeated the giant.

Jesus: He did great!

Mary: Abraham kept on listening and obeying God. Our big family has a lot of stories where God delivered us from all sorts of trouble. Jesus, you must remember to listen to us, your parents, and obey us. For God will bless you and have you live a fruitful life ahead.

Jesus: Yes, I will mother. I am really happy we have a big family!

As the family finishes their dinner, Jesus helps wash the dishes.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. As a class, make the family tree of Jesus to show who are related to Him.
2. Ask these questions.
 - a. What did the family talk about over dinner?
 - b. What did Mary say a covenant is? What was the covenant or agreement between God and Moses?
 - c. How did God keep His promise to Abraham?
 - d. Name the older members of Jesus' family. How were Abraham and David important to the big family of Jesus?
3. *The biblical truth.* Assist the class to say: Jesus was born to a Jewish family that comes from a long bloodline of Abraham and David. Jesus learns more about God's faithfulness to

His people through His family.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: To what family does Jesus belong? To what family do we all belong?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

For ME

1. *Solve the maze.* Present the maze in the activity sheet. Tell the class to help Jesus find his family. After the learners have answered, group them into dyads and let them compare their work. Check the learners' work.
2. *Talk time.* Say: "Name the families in our maze." Ask: "To what family does Jesus belong? To what family do we belong? Why do you think God gave Jesus a family?"

For OE

1. *Expressing oneself in writing a letter to God.* Ask, "Why do you think God gave us Jesus and our family?" Say: Write a letter of thanks to God. Thank God for giving us our own family. Have each learner read the letter before the class.
2. *Completing Matthew 1:17.* Tell the class to replace the blanks with the given pictures. Let them use the activity sheet.

G. Closing Worship

1. Reciting the memory verse: Matthew 1:17
2. Reflective action: Ask the class to recite: "Jesus belongs to a family. We belong to a family. We thank God for our family."
3. Offering
4. Closing song: "O Little Town of Bethlehem"
5. Closing prayer: "Dear God, as Jesus loves his family, may we continue to love our family. Teach us to obey and listen to our family always. In Jesus' name, we pray. 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)

⁴Joseph 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. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And 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 Concepts: Jesus is the son of God given to us. 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, the learners are expected to:

1. accept that Jesus was born as a gift to us;
2. become aware that children are gifts of God to their parents; and
3. begin to talk about the purpose of God for us.

II. Concept: Jesus is the son of God given to us. We welcome Jesus with a joyful heart.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), a well wrapped gift, written outside "Every one, love God", a DVD Player or radio (if available).

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet everyone with a smile and do some review on the previous lesson.
2. Please refer to the Advent Liturgy.

B. Getting Ready

1. Prepare strips of paper. Paste these labels in different parts of the room: Father and son; Mother and son; Father and daughter; and Mother and daughter. Tell the children to get ready to play the game "Parent and Child". Distribute names and let the children paste them on their chests. Ask them to find their match and stand near the correct label. All those pupils who have the correct match wins.
2. Ask: How did you feel when you were able to find your match? Based on the game, what do you think parents feel with their children? What do you think children feel about their parents?

C. Learning Time

1. Say: "God sent God's son Jesus to us. He was born as a human being to be able to live with us."
2. Tell the class to read Luke 2:4-7 in unison.
3. Ask them to read the text again and rearrange the pictures according to the text (Refer to the activity sheet.)
4. Call on some pupils to retell the story using the given pictures.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask these questions

1. Who was God's gift to us? Why do you think so?
2. Since all the inns were full, where did the innkeeper lead Joseph and Mary to spend their night? How did Joseph and Mary show their humility? Why do you think God allowed Jesus to be born in a manger?
3. How do you think Joseph felt after seeing Jesus as told to him by the angel?
4. How do you think Mary felt after seeing Jesus as told to her by the angel?
5. Like Jesus, who is God's gift to your parents?
6. How do you think your parents felt when you are born? Why?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: "At home, who are God's gifts to their parents? (Children)

Ask: Who is God's gift to us? Why did God give Jesus to us? How do we welcome him?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse: "For a child has been born to us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)
2. Ask: "What do you think is God's purpose for us?" Expect answers like the following:
 - a. God's purpose for us is to bring joy to our parents.
 - b. God's purpose for us is to show love for others.
 - c. God's purpose for us is to obey and please God.

For ME

3. Tell the class to complete the table in the activity sheet.

Place	What God wants me to do as my purpose in life
1. At home as older or younger brother or sister	
2. In school with my seatmate, classmate, and teacher	
3. In the Sunday school class	
4. During communion	

4. Creative activity. Manger Envelope Craft

- a. Prepare these materials: short envelop, bond paper, construction paper, crayons,

paste, scissors

b. Tell the children to do the following:

- 1) Cut the upper part of the envelope, leaving an inch from the side to serve as a border.
- 2) Cut strips of brown construction paper and paste on the inside of the envelope.
- 3) Draw, color the baby Jesus on a clean sheet of bond paper and paste it at the center of the envelope.
- 4) Color the rest of the envelope. Put designs.
- 5) Finally, cut and paste a star and put on top of the manger envelop.

c. Ask the class how they feel with what they have done.

For OE

3. Tell the class to complete the table in the activity sheet.

Place	What God wants me to do as my purpose in life
1. At home when asked by my parents to do something	
2. In school with my seatmate, classmate, teacher, and other school officials	
3. In the Sunday During communion	
In the community when asked to manage our garbage	

4. Let the class study the picture in the activity sheet and tell how the family welcomed a baby. Then ask them to write different ways of welcoming a new baby in their family.
5. Creative activity. Popsicle Manger
 - a. Prepare these materials: popsicle sticks, acrylic paint, hot glue, and shredded green straw.
 - b. Tell them to do the following:
 - 1) Paint five popsicle sticks brown. These will be the outline of the stable. Allow the sticks to dry completely. Cut about 1/3 from the top of two of these sticks. (These will be the walls of the stable.)
 - 2) Next, cut one of the popsicle sticks in half. Paint one to represent Mary and the other to represent Joseph. Make sure that they are facing sideways and bending over the manger.
 - 3) Cut another popsicle stick in thirds. Paint one of the thirds white to resemble an angel. Use gold pipe cleaner to make a collar and halo, if desired.
 - 4) Cut one of the thirds slightly smaller and paint to resemble Baby Jesus.
 - 5) Take one of the thirds from the step above and paint it brown. When it's dry, cut it lengthwise to make thin sticks. Glue these together in a top-heavy "X" shape to make the manger. Put in the manger the shredded green straw to look like hay. Hot glue baby Jesus into the manger.
 - 6) Finally, assemble the Popsicle Stick Nativity with hot glue.
 - c. Ask the class how they feel with what they have done.

G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse.
2. Reflective action: *I welcome the coming of Jesus with a joyful heart.*
3. Offering
4. Closing song: "O Come, All You Faithful" (*Hymnal of a Faith Journey* # 135)
5. Closing prayer: Dear God, thank you for giving Jesus to us. Thank you for showing to us Jesus as a human being like us. Help us to do your purpose for us in our lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. 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. ²There is no Holy One like the LORD, no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. ³Talk 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. ⁴The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength. ⁵Those 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. ⁷The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts. ⁸He 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. ⁸He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness; for not by might does one prevail. ¹⁰The 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

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

1. Identify Mary as the first teacher of Jesus in the Jewish faith;
2. recognize and appreciate the first teachers in the Christian faith; and
3. practice sharing the faith with one's siblings, friends, and classmates.

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

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), song chart

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the children as they come.
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 class to think of two home chores that they are happy doing and the reason for their choice. Ask them to share this with their classmates.
2. Ask these questions.
 - a. Who taught you to do these chores?
 - b. How often do you these chores?
 - c. How do you feel when doing these chores?
 - d. Who do you taught Jesus to love what he did? Let us find out in our story.

C. Learning Time

1. Say: "Let us find out from our story who taught the main character in doing his home chores."
2. Present the story in the activity sheet.

Mary and 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.

"Remember, when we pray we are talking to God. We must avoid giggles for God is listening to us. Do as I say." Mary explained further.

Before Jesus prayed the Shemoneh Esrei, he and Mary stood, took three steps forward and three steps backward. They stood and prayed praises, petitions, and thanks to God.

Jesus was happy doing what his mother showed him. They sang psalms to God. He remembered all the lessons he learned for today.

Soon, his eyes felt heavy and he fell asleep on Mary's lap. And Mary hushed, "Sleep tight, my child. You had a long day."

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Discuss the story.

1. Ask these questions.
 - a. Who taught Jesus to pray? (Mary)
 - b. What did Jesus and his mother recite together? (the Shema Israel)
 - c. What else did Mary teach Jesus about God?
 - d. Aside from praying, what else did Mary teach Jesus? (the prayer Shemoneh Esrei)
 - e. What did Mary make Jesus do before they prayed together? (They stood, took three

steps forward and three steps backward.)

- f. What do you do when you pray? (We close our eyes and put our hands together.)
2. Present the pictures that show the activities of Jesus. Let the children talk about them and compare them with what they do (4 given pictures as shown in the activity sheet).
3. *Sharing.* Have the learners take turns in telling what they think about the activity. (Jesus was like us and he listened and followed his parents.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Who taught Jesus about his faith? Who teaches you to pray and love God? What else did he or she teach you about how to love God?"

F Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse: "From now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me and holy is his name." (Luke 1:48)
2. Divide the class into dyads. Let them talk about the part of the lesson they like best. Tell them to present their answer before the class by role playing.
3. *Creative activity.* Ask the class to make thank you cards.
For ME: Let the children prepare cards thanking the persons at home that taught them about the Christian faith.
For OE: Let the children prepare cards thanking the persons in school and in the church that taught them about the Christian faith.

G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse.
2. Reflective action: I am like Jesus when he was small. My parents taught me about my faith. I thank my parents for teaching me.
3. Offering
4. Closing song: "What Child Is This" (*Hymnal of a Faith Journey* # 138)
5. Closing prayer: Thank you dear God, for the persons who taught us our faith. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.