



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

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

Season: ***Advent and Christmastide***

Age Level: ***Adult***

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 Concept: Mary nurtures the family in faith.

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 learners are expected to:

1. describe the social origin of Mary;
2. explain the significance of Mary's social status as she was called by God to be the mother of Jesus;
3. display Mary's conviction to nurture her family in the faith; and
4. as parents, follow the example of Mary in nurturing the family in good times and in the midst of adversities.

II. Concept: Mary nurtures the family in faith.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), hymnal, activity sheets

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Encourage sharing of experiences among the adults.
2. Please refer to the Advent liturgy.

B. Getting Ready

Tell the class to play the game "Name that Parent!" Write a description of the following Bible characters on a piece of paper and put them in a bowl. Ask each student to pick one and name the character. Distribute the activity sheet.

1. She prayed to God for a long time to bear a child, until a son was given to her. She promised to God that she will dedicate him to live in the temple and serve God (Hannah).
2. He listened to the angel of the Lord and brought his family out of Israel to protect them (Joseph).
3. They taught Timothy to have faith in God and to help Paul in ministry and mission (Lois and Eunice).
4. He gathered the Israelites to renew their covenant in Shechem. Then he pledged himself and his household to serve the one and only God. (Joshua).
5. When God sent the angel of death to kill all the firstborn children of Egypt, he reminded his people about Israel's deliverance by God in saving the Israel nation. (Moses).
6. Although not an Israelite woman, when her daughter was sick, she went to Jesus to ask him to save her daughter (Canaanite woman).
7. When God asked him to sacrifice his son, he obediently followed God and God spared his son (Abraham).

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the class to read the biblical texts responsively. Explain that the OT reading has been fulfilled by the NT reading.
2. Present excerpts of the exegesis and companion guide and ask the class to paraphrase them.
 - a. *Exegesis.* God 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. She had also shown her rootedness in the faith that God is in control in whatever may happen.
 - b. *Companion guide.* 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.

Mary 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.

| Main Idea | Details |
|------------------------------|--|
| How Mary nurtured her family | Possible answers: She taught them about the faith using the Torah. She answered her children's questions patiently. She took her children to the synagogue. She took care of their physical needs. She always prayed for God's providence. (Expect other answers.) |

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask these questions.

1. What is Mary's social origin? (Mary is a common folk. She doesn't belong to any royal descendants. She is engaged to Joseph who is also a commoner.)
2. Why was Mary perplexed upon hearing Angel Gabriel's good news? (She will be pregnant despite being unmarried.)
3. How did she accept God's call? (Mary 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.)
4. Is there a significance of Mary's social status when she was chosen to be Jesus' mother? Why or why not? (Yes, because she 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.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "How similar is Mary's way of nurturing her family in faith with parents today?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Tell the class to recall the exercise on naming parents. Ask: "Can you name some parents you know in the present time who exhibits similar behavior with those of the characters that have been mentioned in the exercise?"

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "Silent Night! Holy Night!"
3. Closing prayer: Our God, we praise you for letting us know Mary as she submitted herself to Your Will. May we be like her in responding to Your call of service using the gifts we received from You. 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 Concept: The family of Jesus lived under the dominating powers of the Roman Empire.

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 prophecy of the coming of the light to shine on people;
2. explain the life of Jesus under the domination of the Roman Empire as a life lived in darkness;
3. become aware of the fulfillment of the coming of the light in Jesus; and
4. make resolutions on how life is lived in faith.

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

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), hymnal, activity sheets

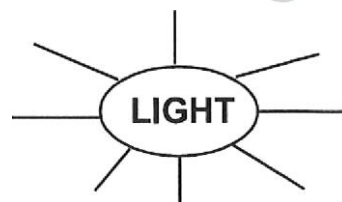
III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Please refer to the Advent Liturgy.

B. Getting Ready

1. Write the word LIGHT on the board. Lead the class in making a concept web by describing what comes in as they read the word



mind

2. After finishing the concept map, form dyads. Let each pair choose words from the map and let them exchange ideas about the choices they made.

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the class to read in unison the biblical texts.
2. Lead the class in discussing the texts.

Isaiah 9:2-5

- a. Let the class relate the concept of light to the prophecy of Isaiah of the coming of a great light that will enlighten those who live in darkness.
- b. Ask the class what this light will provide for the people.
 - 1) Increase their joy.
 - 2) Break the yoke of their burden.

Luke 2:1-3

- a. The requirement of the law to subject the Jewish people to a census
 - b. The effect of this law on the life of the Jewish people
3. Discuss the effect on Jesus' family that lived under the dominating powers of the Roman Empire.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Tell the class to share their thoughts on the following:

1. The difficulties experienced by Jesus and his family under the Roman Empire
2. The difficulties experienced by our people under today's empire
3. Ways of helping us when we face difficulties in our lives

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "How did the family of Jesus live under the dominating powers of the Roman Empire? How do we face our life difficulties?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Tell the class to make a poster. Here are lines that express one's trust in God. Tell the participants working in dyads (pairs) or triads (group of three) the need to complete each line with blank spaces. Have each group present their output in poster form.
 - a. I asked for **strength**... And God **empowered** me to make me strong.
 - b. I asked for **wisdom**... And God gave me _____ to _____
 - c. I asked for **prosperity**... And God gave me _____ to _____
 - d. I asked for **courage**... And God gave me _____ to _____
 - e. I asked for **love**... And God gave me _____ to _____
 - f. I asked for **favors**... And God gave me _____ to _____
2. Encourage the class to make resolutions on how they can live in faith by choosing any one of the sentences previously given.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: Sumabog ang Balita" (*Hymnal of a Faith Journey* # 141) and "Joy to the World" (*Hymnal of a Faith Journey* # 127)
3. Closing prayer: Merciful God, help us to repent with a penitent heart. This is our prayer in Jesus 'name. 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 Eliud, 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 Concept: Jesus is a child of history and of his times.

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. tell that genealogy of Jesus starting from Abraham as a part of history;
2. explain the significance of such lineage;
3. describe Jesus based on His dual nature, true humanity and true divinity; and
4. internalize the behavior of Jesus as a human being and apply such insights to one's life.

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

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), hymnal, activity sheets (family tree, pictures)

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Please refer to the Advent Liturgy.

B. Getting Ready

1. Give each learner a blank sheet of family tree. Allow them to accomplish the family tree. They can add names of their siblings. Assist those who have difficulty in remembering.
2. Ask these questions.
 - a. What are the circumstances related to the family tree that you have made? (place of birth of parents and siblings, socio-cultural environment)
 - b. What family values did you learn from them?

C. Learning Time

1. Say: "Like you, Jesus has his family tree. Open your Bible on Matthew 1:17 and find out who are included in his family."
2. Present the following excerpts:
 - a. *Exegesis on Genesis 17:1-8 and Matthew 1:17.*

Genesis 17:1-8 talks about the signs of promise of God to Abraham. 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.

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 with God's people.

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, 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.

b. *Companion guide.*

It follows that the course in Christian spirituality requires the members to *rediscover 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 wasn't 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.

D. *Deepening Activity/Sharing Time*

Discuss the verses in relation to the advent of Christ.

1. How is Jesus related to Abraham and David? (They are Jesus' ancestors.)
2. Which character in the lineage of Jesus is significant to you and why? (These answers can be drawn for the class based on their previous knowledge of the Bible: Abraham is obedient to God. Rahab hid the Israelite spies from the king's guards to save them. Jacob struggled with the Angel of the Lord and his name is changed from Jacob to Israel. David is a man after God's own heart. Ruth is a faithful believer of God when she chose the God of her mother-in-law. Joseph and Mary served as good parents of Jesus who is to be the Messiah of God's people.)
3. How can you explain that Jesus is a child of history and not a legend? (Historically, Jesus is born in his time like any ordinary human being. He learned the traditions of the Jewish faith from his parents. He shared common aspirations with his people. He saw how his people were treated unjustly by the Roman government. As he grew, his mind was set to serve as God's instrument to establish God's kingdom.)
4. Why do you think the human nature of Jesus is significant to us? (Part of the companion guide: 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.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "How can you explain that Jesus is a child of history and of his times?"

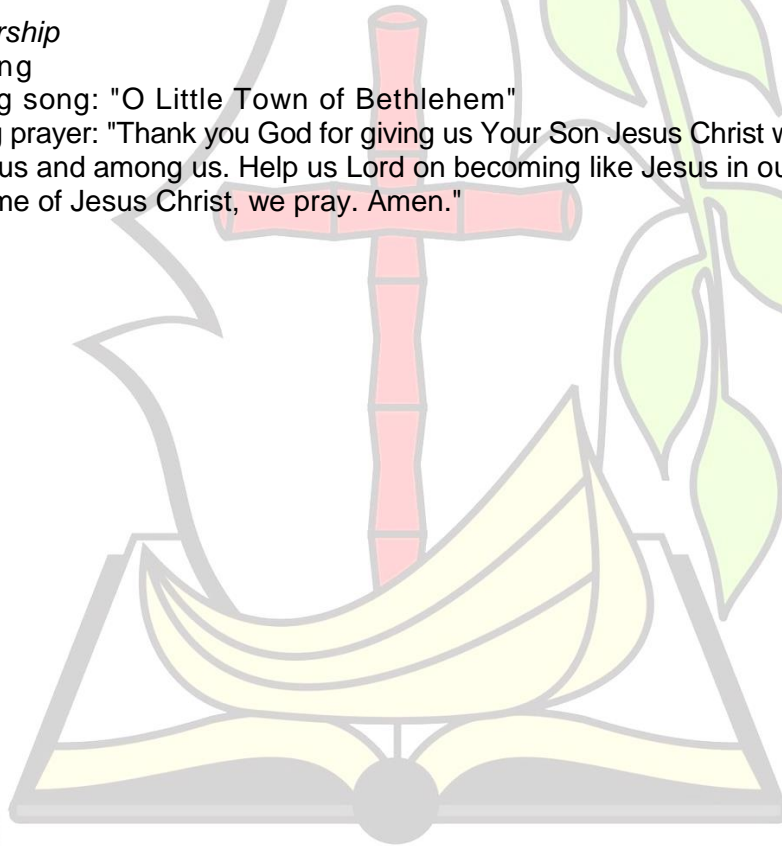
E Applying the Biblical Truth

Tell the class to analyze how Jesus lived among the following situations and how they can apply this in their daily life.

| | How Jesus lived in these situations | How you can apply in one's our daily life |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Relating with his family | | |
| Relating with neighbors | | |
| Relating with his environment | | |

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "O Little Town of Bethlehem"
3. Closing prayer: "Thank you God for giving us Your Son Jesus Christ who lived to be one of us and among us. Help us Lord on becoming like Jesus in our daily life. In the name of Jesus Christ, 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 Concept: Jesus is born to save us.

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. relate the birth of Jesus with God's plan for salvation;
2. explain the meaning of Isaiah's prophecy of the child that shall be born unto us; and
3. focus on one's faith on the real reason for the coming of the Messiah.

II. Concept: Jesus is born to save us.

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

III. Learning Experiences**A. Opening Worship**

1. Welcome time
2. Please refer to the Advent Liturgy.

B. Getting Ready

Let the class share some of the things they do to celebrate Christmas as a family.

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the class to read Isaiah 9:6-7 and Luke 2:4-7.
2. Discuss the meaning of these verses.
 - a. *Isaiah 9:6-7.* Isaiah prophecies about the twofold nature of the Messiah, one who was given to us by God and one who was born as a human being.
 - b. *Luke 2:4-7.* These verses record the actual events that took place related to the travel of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem and the actual birth of Jesus to fulfill the prophecy.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Discuss the lesson by asking these questions.

1. What could be the meaning of Isaiah's prophecy that a child is born to us?
2. Why do you think God's Messiah was born as a commoner and not raised as a king?
3. How can you relate the birth of Jesus with God's plan of salvation?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "What does the birth of Jesus signify? What events happened to prepare for the coming of Christ, our Messiah? How do we prepare ourselves to welcome our Messiah?"

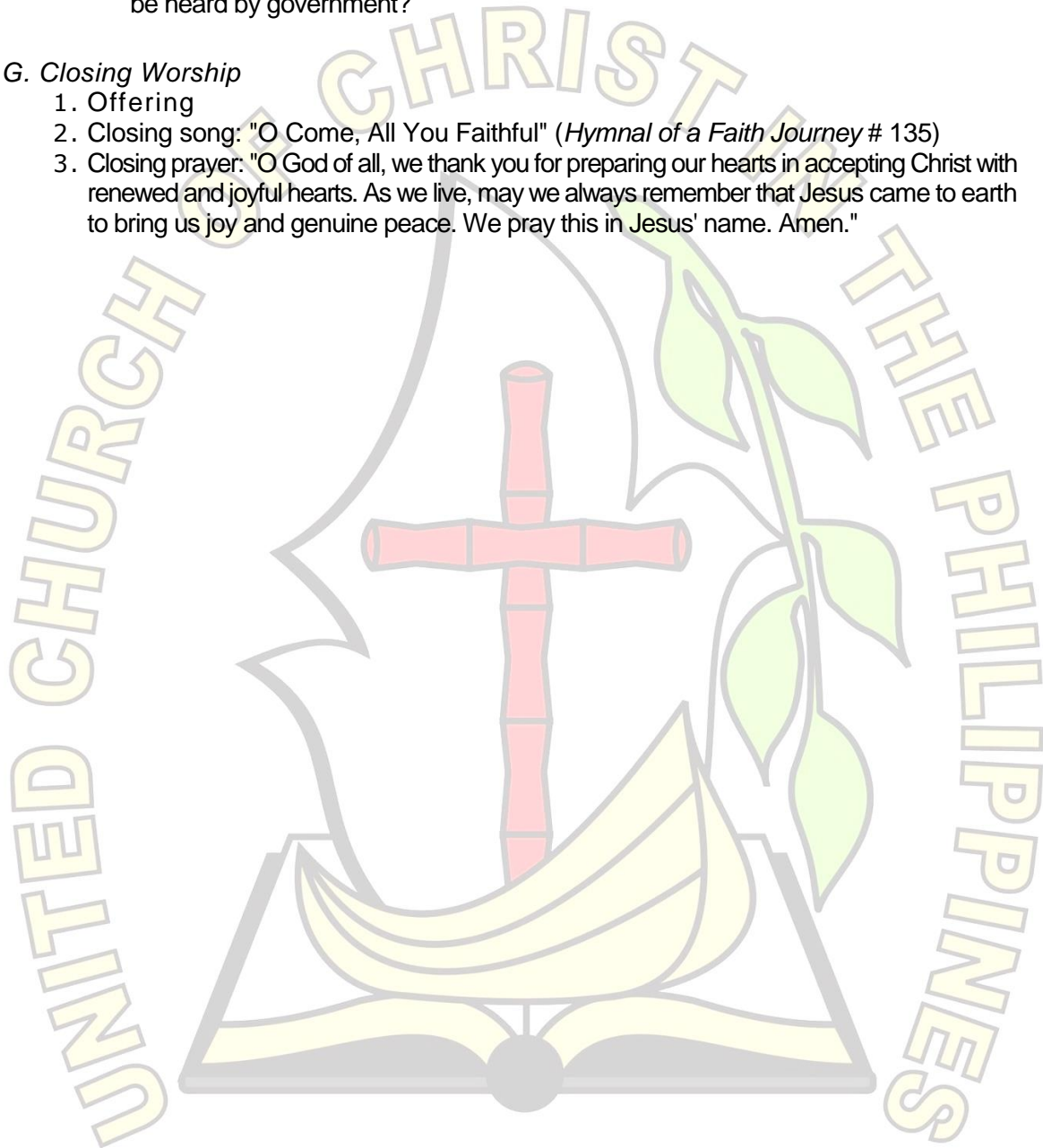
F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. *Interpreting an editorial cartoon.* Present the editorial cartoon in the activity sheet. Ask the class to share their thoughts related to the coming of Jesus.
 - a. How were the poor people during Jesus' time similar to the poor people of today?
 - b. How is the Good News of Jesus good news to the poor? What can we do to help spread the Good News?
 - c. Do you still see hope in this situation? Explain why or why not?
 - d. Where or with whom do you see hope?
2. Ask: How would you nurture your faith? Write an action plan from the following situations.
 - a. The Lumad in Mindanao still experience military harassment. As one of the members of the council in the nearby church in the area, how would you live up to your faith and respond to the needs of the Lumad?

- b. The local government approved a foreign company to do mining in your area. They even promised additional jobs for the local people and even built concrete roads. On the other hand, this plan has resulted to massive nature destruction. What could be the collective action of your church based on your faith?
- c. The extra-judicial killings of innocent but suspected drug pushers and of peace advocates still continue. What can you do as a community of faith to let your voice be heard by government?

G. Closing Worship

- 1. Offering
- 2. Closing song: "O Come, All You Faithful" (*Hymnal of a Faith Journey* # 135)
- 3. Closing prayer: "O God of all, we thank you for preparing our hearts in accepting Christ with renewed and joyful hearts. As we live, may we always remember that Jesus came to earth to bring us joy and genuine peace. We pray this in Jesus' name. 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. ⁶The 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. ⁹He 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 imbibed his mother's character and standpoint towards the world.

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. tell the highlights of the faith of Hannah and Mary as revealed in their songs;
2. compare the standpoints of Hannah and Mary towards the world;
3. describe what Jesus imbibed from Mary's teachings
4. list some of the teachings in the Christian faith that relate to the development of character and worldview as deduced from the songs of Hannah and Mary; and
5. align one's faith with the Christian teachings.

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

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), hymnal, pencils

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening song: first two stanzas of "What Child Is This" (*Hymnal of a Faith Journey* # 138)
3. Opening prayer: Dear God, we honor your holy name. Help us understand the prayers and songs of Hannah and Mary. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

B. Getting Ready

1. Tell the class to identify who among the biblical characters sing songs. Tell them to match their songs about by matching A and B. (You may convert this activity into a game by asking the class to find their match.)

| Column A | Column B |
|---------------|--|
| 1. Moses (b) | a. Sang to announce the birth of the Messiah |
| 2. David (d) | b. Sang to praise God for saving the Israelites from the enemies. |
| 3. Miriam (c) | c. Led the people to sing and dance as they have witnessed God's liberation among God's people |
| 4. Angels (a) | d. Sang to glorify and magnify the mightiness of God |

2. Ask: "Why do you think some characters in the Bible use songs to express their message?"

3. Say: "Let us find out about the songs sang by two mothers, and find out each song's message about their faith."

C. Learning Time

1. Divide the class into two. Call the groups Group Hannah and Group Mary. Direct their attention to the two activity sheets.
2. Tell Group Hannah to read Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2:1-8. After reading the verses, let the group answer the questions.
 - c. How can you describe Hannah's faith as revealed in her song? (Hannah praises God for everything.) How does she praise God?
 - b. Which verses tell Hannah's standpoint about the world? (vv 2-10: God is holy, sovereign, compassionate, and just.)
3. Tell Group Mary to read Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55. After reading the verses, let the group answer these questions.
 - a. How did Mary reveal her faith as she sang her song? (vv. 46-48: God noticed her.) How does she praise God?
 - b. What could be Mary's standpoint about the world (vv. 49-55: God is holy, merciful, powerful, sovereign, and faithful.)?
 - c. What task of Jesus is deduced from Mary's song?
4. Allow 3 minutes for each group to share what they have discussed.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Discuss briefly the background context of each song for deepening of the lesson. Refer to the exegesis and companion guide.
2. Ask these questions.
 - a. Compare the standpoints of Hannah and Mary towards the world. Are their standpoints different or are they the same? How do they differ? How are they the same?
 - b. In the early stage of Jesus' ministry he describes his task. Read Luke 4:18-19.
 - c. Describe what Jesus imbibed from Mary's teachings.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "How did Jesus imbibe his mother's standpoint towards the world? What are some of the teachings of the Christian faith that relate to the development of character as reflected in the songs of Hannah and Mary?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Ask the class to express agreement to this fact: Mary did not only give birth to the Messiah but also raised and taught Jesus about the ministry ahead of him.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: last two stanzas of the song "What Child Is This" (*Hymnal of a Faith Journey* # 138)
3. Closing prayer: Dear God, thank you for letting us realize how Mary taught Jesus to prepare him for his ministry of salvation for all people. Guide us to understand how Jesus focused on his ministry and help us understand his purpose for us. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.