3.8 Advent to Christmas: A Time for Responding in Love

This unit develops the concept of Jesus as gift and the fulfilment of God’s promise. It challenges us to respond in faith and love to this wonderful gift. Mary represents the perfect human response to God’s love. Though surprised by and questioning of God’s call, Mary freely responds in faith and trust to God’s invitation and in so doing prepares the way for the gift of Jesus.

God invites each of us to respond to the gift of Jesus and to cooperate with God’s activity in our lives. Mary and the shepherds lead us to understand what it means to respond to the gift of Jesus. We remember the coming of Jesus as a baby and we open our lives to respond to the presence of Jesus in our lives today.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Values & Attitudes***Students will demonstrate that they are:* | **Knowledge & Understandings***Students will demonstrate that they can:* | **Skills***Students will demonstrate that they can:* |
| L2.1 aware of the relevance of the Scriptures to the liturgical seasons | explain major events in the life of Jesus which are recorded in the Scriptures and celebrated in the liturgical life of the Church | interpret the significant events in the life of Jesus |
| C2.1 able to value the lives of love and service led by saints (including Mary and the canonised saints) | recognise qualities of saints (including Mary and the canonised saints) who are models of love and service | make connections between the qualities of saints (including Mary and the canonised saints) and their lives |

Syllabus Outcomes
Liturgical Year/Church – Stage 2

Classroom Outcomes

*Students will be able to:*

* recall key events in the Scriptures that tell of Mary’s openness to God
* explain how Mary is a model for Christians today
* identify how they can respond to God’s gift of Jesus
* recognise the liturgical seasons of Advent and Christmas as times to celebrate their relationship with God

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Scripture | Doctrine |
| Luke 1: 26-38 *The Annunciation*Luke 1: 39-45 *The Visitation*Luke 2: 1-20 *The Birth of Jesus and visit of the shepherds*Luke 1: 46-56 *The Magnificat* | * Mary is the Mother of God
* Mary responded in faith to God’s call
* Mary’s love and trust is an example for all Christians
* God gives us the gift of Jesus
* We gather in the celebration of the Eucharist to give thanks and praise for the gift of Jesus
 |

Spiritual Reflection for Teachers

*“My sister had gone into labour at 8.20 in the morning. Seven hours later we were still outside the delivery ward waiting for the news of the baby’s arrival. Then at 3.45 the doctor emerged to announce the birth of a bright baby boy.*

*As I drove home that afternoon, I mused that our waiting was a parable of the season of Advent. Just as Mary waited patiently but hopefully for the birth of Jesus, we were waiting for the birth of my nephew, Nathan. And just as the shepherds rejoiced at the birth of Jesus, so my family rejoiced at the birth of Nathan.*

*Nathan is a special gift to my family. Jesus is a special gift to the whole human family!”*

(Reflection by a teacher)

Waiting can be frustrating, but it builds our sense of hope and expectation.

Does this statement reflect your experience?

Catechism of the Catholic Church

**Excerpts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church are included below as information for teachers. They present the Church’s teachings contained in this unit.**

**430 Jesus means in Hebrew: 'God saves.' At the annunciation, the angel Gabriel gave him the name Jesus as his proper name, which expresses both his identity and his mission [Cf.** Lk 1:31 **.] Since God alone can forgive sins, it is God who, in Jesus his eternal Son made man, 'will save his people from their sins' [** Mt 1:21 **; cf.** Mt 2:7 **] in Jesus, God recapitulates all of his history of salvation on behalf of men.**

**484 The Annunciation to Mary inaugurates 'the fullness of time', [** Gal 4:4 **] the time of the fulfilment of God's promises and preparations. Mary was invited to conceive him in whom the 'whole fullness of deity' would dwell 'bodily' [** Col 2:9 **]. The divine response to her question, 'How can this be, since I know not man?', was given by the power of the Spirit: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' [ Lk 1:34-35 (Greek) ].**

**489 Throughout the Old Covenant the mission of many holy women prepared for that of Mary. At the very beginning there was Eve; despite her disobedience, she receives the promise of a posterity that will be victorious over the evil one, as well as the promise that she will be the mother of all the living.[ Cf** Gen 3:15, 20 **]. By virtue of this promise, Sarah conceives a son in spite of her old age. [ Cf** Gen 18:10-14 **;** Gen 21:1-2 **]. Against all human expectation God chooses those who were considered powerless and weak to show forth his faithfulness to his promises: Hannah, the mother of Samuel; Deborah; Ruth; Judith and Esther; and many other women [ Cf** 1 Cor 1:17 **;** 1 Sam 1 **]. Mary 'stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receive salvation from him. After a long period of waiting the times are fulfilled in her, the exalted Daughter of Sion, and the new plan of salvation is established’ [LG 55 ].**

**1171 In the liturgical year the various aspects of the one Paschal mystery unfold. This is also the case with the cycle of feasts surrounding the mystery of the incarnation (Annunciation, Christmas, Epiphany). They commemorate the beginning of our salvation and communicate to us the first fruits of the Paschal mystery.**

Scripture: Background Information

**Luke 1:26-38 The Annunciation**

The Gospel writer Luke prepares us to hear the story of the annunciation of Jesus’ birth by placing it immediately after the account of the annunciation of John the Baptist, child of Elizabeth and Zechariah. The extraordinary element in that story was that John would be born to elderly parents. In the story of Mary we see something more wondrous, the action of the Holy Spirit in the birth of Jesus to a virgin – a young girl already betrothed but as yet unmarried.

The figure of Gabriel links the two stories. The archangel is a messenger of God’s Good News. Gabriel shows us where to look for God’s presence: in a virgin, in an obscure and lowly town called Nazareth. Mary becomes the symbol of the lowly and the poor who figure significantly in Luke’s Gospel. In this text a key interaction is between Mary and Gabriel. This encounter reveals to us the action of the Holy Spirit. Mary’s initial reaction to the news the angel brings is one of surprise and questioning. Through Mary’s questioning she receives reassurance “nothing is impossible to God” (v.37). Mary’s “yes” is no passive submission. It is a free response to God’s initiative which prepares the way for the Incarnation: the birth of Jesus, Son of God.

Mary’s relationship with God is one of mutual faithfulness. For Luke, Mary personifies those who “hear the Word of God and put it into practice” (Luke 8:20–21), those who co-operate with God’s activity in their lives and who rejoice in it, those who ponder the ways of God (Luke 2:20,50), those who are faithful in times of trouble and who triumph over them (Luke 2:34–35).

Mary is a model for our own call to discipleship. Through her co-operation with the will of God she is in unity with the life, death and resurrection of her Son and she shows us the way to unite our lives with this paschal mystery.

In Mary we see that discipleship is a call to activity. The action takes on many forms but each springs from a deep relationship with God. In her lowliness, Mary is a source of hope for all people. Mary is a disciple filled with strength and wisdom, a woman of Spirit and great love who now shares in the glory of her Son, pointing towards the future for the whole Church. (cf. Lumen Gentium, 65). (KWL, Teaching Companion, 3a, p114)

**Luke 1:39-45, 56 The Visitation**

The story of the visitation is a woman’s story. Two unknown and seemingly ordinary women of the first century meet during their pregnancies for mutual support. Mary the younger one, just pregnant with her first child, goes to the older woman who is in a similar condition. It misses Luke’s intent if Mary is presented simply as rushing to aid Elizabeth in her pregnancy. The focus seems to be on the two mothers-to-be coming together to praise the marvelous activity of God in both their lives. Elizabeth’s child, John, leaps in his mother’s womb as Mary greets Elizabeth. He is the one who will prepare people to recognize and receive the promised one. Elizabeth, whom we are told is filled with the Holy Spirit responds by telling Mary that she is blessed and the child in her womb is blessed. Elizabeth praises Mary for trusting in God. Elizabeth’s words point to Mary as the model believer. The writer here is underscoring his jubilee theme that the blessing of God is poured out on ordinary, even unlikely people. In this case, one who appears too old and one who is very young.

**Luke 1:46-56 Mary’s prayer – the Magnificat – My Soul Glorifies the Lord**

The context of Mary’s prayer is the visitation - Mary visiting her elderly cousin Elizabeth who, like herself, is also pregnant: two women sharing women’s business. The prayer of Mary is very similar to Hannah’s prayer in the First Book of Samuel (1 Sam 2:1-10). Hannah after years of waiting had finally conceived and given birth to a son. Her joy is like Mary’s joy here; rejoicing in the goodness of God to the poor, the lowly, the little ones. The Magnificat is full of other Old Testament references from the prophet Habbakuk, the Psalms and the Book of Job. It is a prayer in keeping with the Old Testament and the themes of the Gospel of abundance for all, especially the poor.

**Luke 2:1–20 The Birth of Jesus and visit of the Shepherds**

Luke’s presentation of Jesus’ birth is a rich theological tapestry and shows his skill as a writer bringing together reliable traditions in his infancy narrative. This passage introduces eight of the themes, which run through his Gospel: food, salvation, grace, today, joy, lowliness, peace and universalism. It establishes Jesus as the Messiah, Christ and Lord in the line of David for whom the Jewish people waited.

The vast Roman Empire at this time, spread across the Mediterranean from the Iberian Peninsula (Spain) to Syria and Judea – an area comparable to the area of Australia. Over this empire, peace (Pax Romana) was brought about by suppression and oppression and maintained by military force, and the rule of law and the flow of commerce.

The helpless infant is an image in stark contrast to the powerful Roman ruler, Caesar Augustus. In Luke’s Gospel we are shown that the infant Jesus will be the bearer of a different kind of peace. He will restore right relationship and walk with those who are marginalised or alienated, bringing wholeness and salvation.

The sense of God’s presence and the joy of the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophesy (Is 61:1) permeate the narrative. The events described are Good News, especially to those who enjoy “God’s favour” – this means for Luke the poor and the lowly.

Although its dating is uncertain, the Roman census is given as the reason for Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem from their home in Nazareth. Obedience to the civic laws places Mary and Joseph in the City of David, Bethlehem, where the birth of the Messiah was expected to occur (Micah 5:1). This reinforces Jesus’ connection with the royal Davidic line, already legally established through his foster father, Joseph.

Jesus is born into a hostile environment as there is no place for him to be born except a stable, a cave for animals. He is placed in a manger, the animals’ feeding trough. Ironically, this helpless child will become the one who offers hospitality to others, who will give himself as food in the Eucharist. It is interesting to note that Bethlehem means ‘city of bread’. Mary wraps Jesus in swaddling clothes, customary for security and to assure good growth but also reminiscent of Wisdom 7:4 where Solomon, son of David is nurtured in swaddling clothes with every care.

Luke 2:11–14 are the key verses in this passage. The angels are messengers of Good News. They are not signs of God’s presence in themselves, but they point to the real signs: the baby, swaddling clothes, manger. They show the lowly ones that the prophesy of Isaiah (61:1) is being fulfilled and where to look for God’s Kingdom in their own time and place.

At that time, shepherds were among the lowliest of society, regarded as ‘unclean’ in a society which valued ritual cleanliness. It is these lowly ones, however, who hear the message of joy from the angels, who receive it first with fear, then with delight. The shepherds wonder at the amazing events of the night. They then go out searching for the signs. Having received the message of the angels, these shepherds in turn become God’s heralds of the Good News (vv 16–18).

Mary hears the news from the shepherds, firstly with astonishment and then as a treasure which she ponders in her pure heart. The full meaning and significance of Jesus’ birth and destiny does not happen immediately. On a journey of faith we need to take time to wonder about, ponder upon and to treasure our relationship with Jesus. In her response, Mary the Virgin Mother is our model as we too ponder the mystery of Jesus. [[1]](#footnote-1)

The Church’s Teaching and Lived Tradition

**In Tradition: *To Know, Worship and Love*, Year 3, p73 - The Angelus**

The Angelus is a prayer which calls to mind the Incarnation at specified times during the day. Originally it was said in the evening with the tolling of the “Ave Maria” bell which called people to pray nine Hail Marys. In the thirteenth century, two more prayer times were added at dawn and noon. [[2]](#footnote-2)

**In Tradition: *To Know, Worship and Love*, Year 3, p145 - Apostles’ Creed and Early Christian Prayer of Welcoming Our Lord**

Creeds were formed out of early belief statements used at baptisms in the early Church. One of the early forms of belief statements in the Roman Church became the Apostles’ Creed. Although this creed was not composed at a meeting of Christ’s disciples, it contains statements of faith based on those found in the Scriptures, so it is derived from the faith and teaching of the apostles.

“Mara-na tha!” in Aramaic means “Come, our Lord”. In Revelation 22:20, the Greek equivalent means “Come, Lord Jesus!” It is also an ancient chant often used today as an invitation during meditation. We begin our prayer by inviting the Spirit of Jesus into our lives: mind, body and soul.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Celebration: Prayer and Liturgy

**Celebration is a key part of Religious Education. The following suggestions provide opportunities throughout the unit for celebration in prayer and liturgy. Most of these suggestions are included as ‘teaching/learning’ activities in Unit Content sections.**

* Use Resource Sheet 2 ‘Our Advent Prayer Place’ to set up the class prayer place for Advent.(This prayer is in Unit Content 2 but is to use at the beginning of the Advent season.
* Introduce students to the Angelus (In Tradition p73 or p151 in KWL Year 3). Link this prayer and the Hail Mary to the scriptural text. This prayer can be included in daily class prayer or can be prayed at noon each day.
* Students write a simple prayer of petition asking God’s help for times when they have to make difficult decisions.
* Prepare a prayer in response to Mary’s ‘yes’ in Lk 1:26-38.
* Prepare with students a class liturgy celebrating Mary’s faithfulness and love. (See *Follow the Star – Prayer and Celebration Resource Book* by P Hehir and M Mangan.).
* Construct a class Advent wreath and use the wreath for daily class prayer.
* Use Resource Sheet 2 ‘Our Advent Prayer Place’ to set up the class prayer place for Advent.
* Read Luke 1: 46-56. This is Mary’s song of praise to God called The Magnificat. Students may gain a better understanding by learning to sing ‘The Magnificat’ (by P Kearney, C Landry or J Cosgrove) In groups, students create a movement to the hymn. (Refer to ‘Creative Arts K-6 Dance and Drama, Moments and Movements in Life’ J Charadia.) Students write a prayer of praise to God for: (a) Mary OR (b) Jesus OR (c) all that God does for us. These prayers can be used as part of the class’ daily prayer.
* Using ‘In Tradition’in KWL, Year 3, p145 explain the meaning of Mara-na-tha. Learn ‘Come Lord Jesus’ by C Landry, *Hi God 2* or ‘Come Lord Jesus’ by M Mangan or recall ‘It’s Advent’by J Cosgrove, *Celebrating our Unexpected God.* Use Mara-na-tha as a response in morning prayer.
* Find all the titles given to Jesus in Lk 2:1-20 and add to the class list begun in Unit Content 1 and 2. Discuss their importance. How did Jesus show throughout his life that he was Son of God, Prince of Peace, Saviour etc. Use the list to develop a litany that can be said during class prayer. The litany could follow the usual format or could be expanded to the following format:

Jesus, Prince of Peace Jesus, ………………………….

Christ who heals Christ who …………………….

Lord of gentleness Lord of ………………………...

* Students write a prayer of praise thanking God for sending Jesus to be the Saviour of the world.
	+ - Prepare a class liturgy focusing on our response to the gift of Jesus.

Assessment

**Interim Assessment Statement 2014**

The identification of Teaching/Learning strategies as ‘suggested assessment’ has been removed from the 3-6 RE curriculum. The type of assessment activity and the way evidence of learning is gathered will vary, depending on such factors as; the outcomes being assessed, the evidence being gathered, the teaching and learning activity, context and students’ learning needs (NSW Board of Studies, <http://syllabus.bos.nsw.edu.au/support-materials/k-6-assessment-strategies/>) .

Assessment in Religious Education is based on the same principles as in other key learning areas. Please refer to the CEO Sydney site supporting the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in the context of the NSW BOS Syllabus. At this site <https://sites.google.com/a/syd.catholic.edu.au/professional-learning-modules/home> professional learning modules are provided to support teachers as they engage with the NSW BOS Syllabuses for the Australian Curriculum.

**Module 4, Assessment and Planning** explores the principles of effective assessment ***for***, ***as*** and ***of*** learning and considers a range of strategies and methods for assessing student learning. Activities focus on moving beyond assessment as an index of learning, towards assessment that motivates, enhances learning and achieves deeper understanding to meet the diverse learning needs of all as students. Participants are encouraged to reflect on assessment as a driver for improvement in teaching and learning.

**Religious Education Curriculum and Assessment**

In Year 3-6 Religious Education Curriculum, both Syllabus Outcomes and Classroom Outcomes are key reference points for decisions about students’ progress and achievement. Classroom outcomes are more specific to the unit content. Unit Content statement and *Students will learn* statements in each unit should also be taken into account in planning and developing learning and assessment opportunities. Outcomes and Unit Content Statements are derived from Syllabus objectives.

Effective Religious Education involves teaching the Catholic faith (Scripture, doctrine, traditions, prayer and sacraments) and nurturing the faith of the child. There is no attempt to assess the child’s faith. Assessment is concerned with skills, knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith taught in the curriculum and supported in the religious life of the school.

Resources

***To Know Worship and Love* - Year 3, Chapter 9 & 18 (2003), James Goold House Publications, Melbourne, Vic**

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Cosgrove J, (2001), *Sacred Celebrations for Advent and Christmas Year A Celebrating Our Unexpected God*

Cosgrove J, (1997), *A Christmas Pageant,* J Cosgrove, Springwood, Qld

Harkman B, (1996), *A Night the Stars Danced for Joy,* Lion Publishing, Oxford

Hehir P and Mangan M, (1995), *Follow the Star – Prayer and Celebration Resource Book,* Litmus Productiions, Albany Creek

Kearney P, (1999), *How Far to Bethlehem?* Crossover Music, Mittagong

Landry C, (1976), *Hi God 2,* North American Liturgy Resources, Arizona

Mangan M, (1995), *My Spirit Sings*  Litmus Productions, Albany Creek

Mangan M, (1995), *Follow the Star,* Litmus Productions, Albany Creek

Reehorst J, (1986), *Guided Meditations for Children,* Brown Co Publishers, USA

Reehorst J, (1991), *Guided Meditations for Children 2,* Brown Co Publishers, USA

Singer C and Hari A, (1993), *Experience Jesus Today,* OCP Publications, Oregon

Stead B, (1994), *A Time of Jubilee – Using Luke’s Gospel with Children,* Desbooks, Melbourne

Thiele C, (1994), *Gemma’s Christmas Eve,* Openbook Publishers, Adelaide, SA

Threlfo W, (2001), *Walking with Mary,* Marist Resources, Mittagong, NSW.

Wintour R, (2002), *Just Imagine 2,* Mountjoy Enterprises, Brisbane, Qld

Wintour R, (2001/2002/2003), *Sacred Celebrations for Advent and Christmas Year A/ Year B/ Year C,* Mountjoy Enterprises, Brisbane, Qld

*The Best of Celebrate ©*  Collins Dove, (1989)

<http://www.cptryon.org/prayer/adx/adwreath.html>

<http://www.cptryon.org/prayer/child/adv.html>

Key to Symbol

✪ denotes higher order activity

Unit Content 1

Mary responded to God with faithfulness and love.

*Students will learn:*

* about Mary’s response to God’s call
* about Mary’s response as an example for all Christians

Unit Content: Background Information

God chose Mary, an ordinary person like us, to perform an extraordinary task. In her free response to God’s initiative, Mary prepares the way for the Incarnation and cooperates in God’s plan for the salvation of humanity. Mary represents the perfect human response to God’s love. Mary’s response is no passive acceptance; rather it is one of faith, of hope, trust and openness to the activity of God in her life.

Mary has total trust in God. She hears and does God’s word. She is the first to believe and is a model for all who come to believe. Mary is the disciple *par excellence* and is a model for our own response to discipleship. Followers of Jesus model themselves on Mary whenever they seek to ‘hear the Word of God and keep it’ (Mt 12:50).

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* Explore faithfulness/trust using a picture book. Students share experiences of placing faith in others and of being trusted. These situations may be dramatised. List ways we can be faithful to our friends and family.
* Reflect on times of fear and uncertainty. Explore the students’ emotions and physical reactions for each. Students complete a Y chart on faithfulness/trust.
* Tell the story of The Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38) using 3D materials. See suggested script - Resource Sheet 1.
* Engage students in wondering. Suggested wondering statements are:

I wonder what you find amazing, or puzzling in this story.

I wonder how hard it was for Mary to trust God.

I wonder what the angel Gabriel’s words, “Nothing is impossible to God” mean.

I wonder why there were two messages, or two promises from God.

* Students respond to the scripture passage by
	+ using 3D materials to re-tell story.
	+ choosing a part of the story to draw, paint, or write about.
	+ representing the moods and emotions within the text through use of either a mandala or freeze frames.
* Read KWL, Year 3, p72-73. In groups, students work with the text to identify: (a) the main characters (b) what the characters said and did (c) words to indicate Mary’s feelings or reactions (d) the titles given to Jesus (e) what we learn about Jesus and Mary (f) Mary’s response (g) the role of the Holy Spirit
* Introduce students to the Angelus (‘In Tradition’, p73 or p151, KWL Year 3). Link this prayer and the Hail Mary to the Scriptural text. The Angelus can be included in daily class prayer times or can be prayed at noon each day. Introduce the doctrine – Mary is the Mother of God.
* Explore what it means to say ‘Yes’ to God. Play a ‘What If’? game.

What if Mary had said ‘No’ to the angel Gabriel?
What if Joseph had chosen not to support Mary in her role as Mother of God?

* Brainstorm times when students have been asked by parents or teachers to undertake a difficult task. Role play those situations requiring a faith choice to be made.
* Identify times in our own lives when we can follow Mary and say ‘yes’ to God. Share with a partner.
* Students write a simple prayer of petition asking God’s help for times when they have to make difficult decisions.
* Read KWL, Year 3, p70. Reflect on Mary’s example. Introduce the doctrine – Mary responded in love to God’s call. Mary’s love and trust is an example for all Christians. Learn the hymn, ‘Mary Said Yes’ by M Mangan.
* Prepare a prayer in response to Mary’s ‘yes’ in Lk 1:26-38.
* Students retell the scripture passage of the Annunciation (Lk 1:26-38) and respond to the following question ‘How is this story an example of Mary being open to receive God’s gift of Jesus?’
* Identify people, who like Mary, say or have said ‘yes’ to God. Play the ‘Good News Scavenger Hunt’ from *Sacred Celebrations for Advent and Christmas Year A* by R Wintour (p44). This game uses a matrix with a ‘good news’ action in each space. The students find the names of different people who are ‘good news’ in some way. Students identify and/or illustrate ways they can follow Mary’s example of being open to God and bring the gift of Jesus (the Good News) to others.
* Prepare with students a class liturgy celebrating Mary’s faithfulness and love. (See *Follow the Star – Prayer and Celebration Resource Book* by P Hehir and M Mangan.)

Unit Content 2

During Advent we prepare to receive the gift of Jesus.

*Students will learn:*

* about how Mary prepared for the gift of Jesus
* to identify ways we can prepare to receive the gift of Jesus

Unit Content: Background Information

The Church’s liturgical year begins on the first Sunday of Advent. The term Advent comes from the Latin, *Adventus*, which means coming toward. During Advent the Church prepares with joyful expectation to celebrate the coming of Christ. The season has a two-fold character: (i) preparation to celebrate the first coming of the Son of God at Bethlehem; and (ii) directing our minds to the second coming of Christ at the end of time (*parousia*). These two understandings are reflected in the prayers of the Mass used during this season. Advent is a season of joyful and spiritual expectation – joyful anticipation of the incarnation (God becoming human in Jesus Christ) and through this, joyful expectation of the *parousia*. The liturgical colour for the season is violet/purple.

The Advent wreath is used to mark the four weeks of preparation for Christmas. It is usually covered with green foliage and has four candles (three purple and one pink) representing the four Sundays in Advent. The pink candle is lit on the third Sunday and reflects the joyful anticipation in the readings. As the candles are lit successively each Sunday we are reminded that we await the coming of Jesus Christ – The Light of the World.

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* On a calendar, identify when Advent starts and finishes. Explain to the students that the first week of Advent is the start of the new liturgical year. Review the purpose of the season and its liturgical colour and symbols. Investigate the history and symbols surrounding the Advent wreath on the Internet. See resources for addresses or use *Sacred Celebrations for Advent and Christmas* Rina Wintour. Use the picture of the Advent wreath in KWL, Year 3, p146 for class discussion. Construct a class Advent wreath and use the wreath for daily class prayer.
* Use Resource Sheet 2 ‘Our Advent Prayer Place’ to set up the class prayer place for Advent.
* Students list signs, activities and preparations that indicate Christmas is approaching. Identify and describe the preparations that are undertaken at home and in the parish.
* Use KWL, Year 3, p142-143 and explore words like ‘preparation’, ‘waiting’, ‘expectation’, ‘promise’ usually associated with Advent. Explain the titles given to Jesus (Messiah, Promised Saviour) and add to the list of titles begun in Unit Content 1. Learn the song ‘It’s Advent’ by J Cosgrove, *Celebrating Our Unexpected God*.
* In preparation for exploring Luke 1:39-45 use Resource Sheet 3. Find Nazareth on the map and locate the area of Judah. Provide some background about life and culture in Mary’s time. Use *A Time of Jubilee – Using Luke’s Gospel with Children* by B Stead or *Experience Jesus Today* by C Singer and A Hari. Discuss the distance between Nazareth and Jerusalem, the means of travel and the time involved to reach the destination.
* Tell the Story of The Visitation (Luke 1: 39-45) using 3D materials and script - Resource Sheet 4.
* Engage students in wondering. Suggested wondering statements are :

I wonder why Mary would have gone to visit her relative, Elizabeth.

I wonder why Elizabeth’s baby moved when Mary greeted Elizabeth.

I wonder how Elizabeth knew Mary was going to have such a special child.

I wonder what the women talked about.

I wonder if you find anything puzzling or amazing in this story.

* After the story and wondering, students choose an activity they wish to undertake to explore/ play with the story:
	+ Students use materials to retell the story.
	+ Students work with a partner to present a mind map of the story of the Visitation, including the events and the people’s responses.
	+ As a joint construction, rewrite the visitation story from Elizabeth’s point of view. Create as a big book with illustrations to present to a younger class.
	+ Hot Seat: Students imagine themselves to be Elizabeth or Mary and are interviewed by the class. The themes of the questions are to be around preparation, reactions and emotions.
	+ Students use the visual arts to represent a part of the story of their choice
* Read Luke 1:46-56. This is Mary’s song of praise to God called ‘The Magnificat’. After exploring the reading, learn to sing a version of this prayer of praise (by P Kearney, M Mangan, C Landry or J Cosgrove.) In groups, students create a movement to the hymn. (Refer to *Creative Arts K-6 Dance and Drama, Moments and Movements in Life* byJ Charadia.) Students write a song/prayer of praise to God for: (a) Mary OR (b) Jesus OR (c) all that God does for us. These prayers can be used as part of the daily prayer of the class.
* Students draw Mary in the centre of the page and surround Mary with questions and challenges that she might have faced in preparing for the birth of Jesus.
* Using ‘In Tradition’in KWL, Year 3, p145 explain the meaning of Mara-na-tha. Learn ‘Come Lord Jesus’ by C Landry, *Hi God 2* or ‘Come Lord Jesus’ by M Mangan or recall ‘It’s Advent’by J Cosgrove, *Celebrating our Unexpected God.* Use Mara-na-tha as a response in morning prayer.
* Reflect on the words of the hymn/s and ask students: How will Jesus be born into our hearts? How will our hearts be ready for him? How do we respond to the presence of Christ in our lives today? Christ has already come into our world so how can we continue to recognise the presence of Christ among us? How can we see the face of Christ in our families, our friends, our neighbours, our school/local community? Students record their responses.
* Students then draw themselves in the centre of the page and respond to the question ‘How do we prepare to receive Jesus?’ Sort and classify the ideas into things we do at home, school and church. Students decide on actions they will personally undertake this Advent and make an Advent calendar or diary of the things they will do for others. (Students can refer back to their Good News list from the previous Unit Content.)

Unit Content 3

Jesus, God’s gift to us, is born.

*Students will learn:*

* about Jesus as God’s gift to us and the fulfilment of God’s promise
* about the response of the shepherds to the birth of Jesus

Unit Content: Background Information

A new day has dawned for the people of God with the coming of Jesus at Christmas. The birth of the Christ child in Bethlehem was the beginning of a new dimension in the relationship between God and humankind. Through the Incarnation, Jesus came to share in our human life so that we could share in the divine life of the Trinity.

Christmas is also the feast of our redemption. The mystery of the Incarnation (God becoming a human being) is inseparable from Paschal mystery. The Incarnation is an intrinsic moment in the historical process by which grace is communicated to all persons through Christ.

The birth of Jesus is accompanied by joy, which involves both heaven and earth in praise of God. The shepherds accept the message of the angel as the word of the Lord and immediately set off in search of the child. They go to Bethlehem and there they find Mary, Joseph and the baby lying in the manger. The fulfilment of God’s promise of salvation permeates the shepherds’ response. They recognise they are in the presence of God and become believers of the Good News, praising God for all they have seen and heard. These uneducated, lowly shepherds become the first to give witness to this pivotal event in the story of salvation.

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* Students Think-Pair-Share what it means if we say a person is a gift. What are other ways of saying the same thing? Brainstorm all the gifts that God has given us. Introduce the doctrine: God gives us the gift of Jesus.
* Tell the story of the Birth of Jesus (Lk 2:1-20) using 3D materials and script - Resource Sheet 5. Engage students in wondering. Suggested wondering statements are

I wonder what the place was like where Mary had her baby.

I wonder what the words, “the glory of the Lord shone around them” mean/ or what that might look like.

I wonder how the shepherds found Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus in Bethlehem.

I wonder what it means that Mary “treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart”.

I wonder what you ponder in your heart.

* Draw on the students’ knowledge of their own birth or the birth of siblings. How can one person make a difference in a family? Every person brings their own gifts and talents. Allow students opportunities to reflect on and articulate how Jesus made a difference in this world. Whom does the birth of Jesus affect today and how? Learn ‘Waiting for the Child’by M Mangan, *Follow the Star.*
* Explain the meaning of a census and why Mary and Joseph undertook the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Trace the journey on a map.
* Students read the scriptural text in KWL, Year 3, p144-145. Explore the feelings and emotions of the main characters. Focus on the response of the shepherds. They accept the message of the angel and go to find Mary, Joseph and the baby. They become believers of the Good News, praising God for all they have seen and heard. Focus students’ attention on the gift of Jesus as being the fulfilment of God’s promises.
* ✪ - Students write a recount of the events from the point of view of the shepherds and portray the feelings and emotions through colour, texture and line.
* Read an appropriate picture book (*The Night the Stars Danced for Joy* by B Harkman) that highlights the response of the shepherds. Learn some appropriate Christmas carols/songs.
* Students are asked to imagine that they are a visitor to Bethlehem at the time of the birth of Jesus. Students complete a Y chart to assess their understanding of the events of the story of the nativity. What does it feel like? What does it sound like? What does it look like?
* Find all the titles given to Jesus in Luke 2:1-20 and add to the class list begun previously. Explore what these titles tell us about Jesus. How did Jesus show throughout his life that he was Son of God, Prince of Peace, Saviour etc. Use the list to develop a litany that can be said during class prayer. The litany could follow the usual format or could be expanded to the following format:

 *Jesus, Prince of Peace Jesus*

 *Christ who heals Christ who …………………….*

 *Lord of gentleness Lord of ………………………...*

* Students write a prayer of praise or thanks to God in response to the gift of Jesus.

Unit Content 4

In my life I can respond to God’s gift of Jesus.

*Students will learn:*

* about Christmas as a time when we reach out to others
* about how the Catholic community celebrates the birth of Jesus.
* to identify ways they can respond to God’s gift of Jesus in their lives

Unit Content: Background Information

During the Christmas season, we celebrate the unending love God has for us and also the love we should have for others. We celebrate God’s promise to send a Saviour which is fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus reveals God’s great love for all people. We rejoice in the gift of Jesus and we share the joy of Christmas with other people. We especially reach out through prayer and service to those who are ill, lonely, hungry, homeless or in need. We respond to God’s gift of Jesus in our lives by contributing to building a world where love, joy, peace and justice flourish. The Christmas season challenges us to see Christ in others and to reach out to them in love.

Christmas must make a difference in our lives before it can make a difference in the world. As angels announced the good news of Christ’s birth, so we must live and tell others about the ongoing presence of Jesus Christ for all people. As Jesus revealed God to the world, so too we must be signs of God to others. Throughout the Christmas season we reflect on Jesus’ presence and action in our lives and we renew the challenge of living as followers of Jesus and being bearers of the Good News.

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* Students recall times when they have received gifts - gifts that were surprises and gifts that were longed for. What was the waiting like? How did you respond to the gift/giver? What were the feelings? Highlight the anticipation, the longing and the excitement. The people who waited for the gift of Jesus experienced those same feelings.
* Allow students time to reflect on the question: Why did God send us the gift of Jesus? Share and journal responses. Use Resource Sheet 6 ‘The Nativity.’ Learn a Christmas hymn on this theme.
* Reflect on the love and peace that Jesus brings to us. How can we respond to this gift of Jesus? What can we do? Brainstorm and list answers. In small groups, students expand on one of the ideas with the support of key questions from the teacher.
* Discuss why the spirit of joy, peace and goodwill at Christmas should be a part of our everyday life, not just at Christmas.
* Students draw two concentric circles with an image of themselves in the centre circle. Inside the outer circle, students choose ways they can respond to the gift of Jesus today, next week, at Christmas, at home, at church, at school.
* Express in creative form, a list of class promises, which could help make the Christmas holidays more peaceful for the family and show goodwill towards others. These could be in the form of a card to the family expressing how the student will be helpful during the Christmas holidays or offer their services in some way to help others. Focus attention on the belief that by promoting truly human values of love and concern for others we respond to the gift of Jesus in our lives.
* Gift giving is an important part of the celebration of Christmas. Who do we give to and why? Christmas is a time of year when we think about the poor, the lonely and the homeless. Examine ways in which we might respond to the needs of various people and groups within the community this Christmas.
* Brainstorm ways of giving gifts that do not cost any money. Carry out a class Kristkindl.
* Students decide on an action that the whole class will undertake, eg food hamper/raising money for the local St Vincent de Paul Society; learning Christmas carols to sing at the local hospital/nursing home. Use a manger to collect gifts or food.
* Explore how Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus. In groups, students list what happens in our homes, our school and parish communities. Doctrine: We gather in the celebration of the Eucharist to give thanks and praise to God for the gift of Jesus.
* ✪ - Present a research report on how different cultural groups respond to the Christmas message of goodwill.
* Prepare a class liturgy focusing on our response to the gift of Jesus.

**Resource Sheet 1**

the annunciation

 (Luke 1:26-38)

**You will need:**

* Beige felt underlay
* Brown felt road
* 3 D Figures: Mary and Angel Gabriel (could be from a Nativity set or peg figures)
* Bible

*Children are seated in a semi-circle ready to listen to the story. When the children are ready carry the materials carefully from the story shelf to the story area and place beside you and say*

*Place class Bible, open at Luke, in front of you with your hand on it.*

**This story comes from the Gospel according to Luke, which is in the New Testament section of the Bible.**

*Place Bible beside you.*

*Lay underlay and then the road. Place Mary on the underlay to the side of the road. Hold the angel in your hand as you say:*

**Angels are special messengers sent by God.**

**One day God sent the angel, whose name was Gabriel, to the town of Nazareth. The angel had a message for a young woman, named Mary, who lived in that town.**

*Place the angel Gabriel near Mary and turn the angel towards Mary as you say:*

**Gabriel spoke to Mary saying, “Greetings, O favoured one. The Lord is with you.”**

*Move Mary a little way away from the angel and say:*

**What sort of greeting was this! Mary was perplexed and wondered what it meant!**

*Place your hand behind the angel as you say:*

**The angel reassured Mary saying, “Do not be afraid, Mary. I am here to tell you that God is very pleased with you. You are going to have a son, and you will name him Jesus.”**

*Move the angel to be closer to Mary and say:*

**Your child will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.**

*Place your hand behind Mary and say:*

**Mary was even more perplexed, and said to Gabriel, “How can this be?”**

*Place your hand over Mary, as though blessing her, and say:*

**Again the angel Gabriel reassured Mary saying, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, therefore your son will be holy and he will be called the Son of God.**

**Gabriel continued with another message, “Mary, even though your cousin, Elizabeth is very old, she also is going to have a baby boy... You see *nothing* is impossible to God.”**

*Move Mary to face away from and a little way from the angel, and say:*

**Mary wondered what all this meant; how could these things possibly happen?**

*Move Mary back to the angel, and say:*

**Even though she didn’t fully understand, Mary trusted in God and said, “Here I am, the servant of God, let these things happen just as you have said.”**

*Remove the angel, and say:*

**After hearing Mary’s response, the angel, Gabriel left her.**

*Pause for a while before wondering with the students.*

I wonder…

I wonder what you find amazing, or puzzling, in this story.

I wonder how hard it was for Mary to trust God.

I wonder what the angel Gabriel’s words, “Nothing is impossible to God” mean.

I wonder why there were two messages, or two promises from God.

**Resource Sheet 2**

**3.8 Our Advent Prayer Place**

**YOU WILL NEED:**

* a small table
* a box or basket, containing a ***purple*** cloth, Bible, bookstand, candle and gift box, next to your chair

*Invite children to sit reverently in a circle in the part of the classroom where you intend to set up a prayer place. Begin by saying…*

**As Advent begins we’re going to change our prayer place. This is a place where we can be quiet with God. We can listen to God and pray.**

**During the season of Advent we’ll have some different objects and symbols to help us to pray.**

*Cover the table with the* ***purple*** *cloth.*

**At this time of the Church’s year we place a *purple* cloth on the table.**

**Purple is the colour for getting ready. Advent is a time for getting ready. Advent marks the beginning of the Church Year.**

**During Advent we are getting ready to celebrate Christmas.**

*Hold the Bible up for all children to see. Be conscious of handling the Bible in a reverent manner.*

**The Bible is our special book. At this time in the Church’s year we tell the stories of people who were getting ready for the birth of Jesus.**

*Demonstrate how to carry, lift and hold the Bible in a reverent manner.*

*Place the Bible on a stand on the table.*

*Take out the candle and show to children.*

**The candle reminds us that Jesus is always with us. We will light the candle when we are talking and praying to God, and when we are listening to the stories from the Bible.**

*Place the candle on the table.*

*Take out the gift box and show to children.*

**Advent is a time when we prepare to receive God’s gift of Jesus to us at Christmas.**

*Place the gift box in the space.*

**Other symbols may be added appropriate to the season and unit.**

**This is our prayer place for Advent.**

*Point to the symbols and objects as you name them again.*

**It has a *purple* cloth, a Bible, a candle, and a gift box to symbolize God’s gift of Jesus.**

**Resource Sheet 3**

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 (KWL Teaching Companion 3a, p76)

**Resource Sheet 4**

the VISITATION

 (Luke 1:39-45)

**You will need:**

* Beige felt underlay
* Brown felt road
* 3 D Figures: Mary and pregnant Elizabeth
* Bible

*Children are seated in a semi-circle ready to listen to the story. When the children are ready carry the materials carefully from the story shelf to the story area and place beside you and say*

*Place class Bible, open at Luke, in front of you with your hand on it.*

**This story comes from the Gospel according to Luke, which is in the New Testament section of the Bible.**

*Place Bible beside you.*

*Lay underlay and then the road. Place Mary on the road near you. Place Elizabeth at the opposite end of the underlay, to the side of the road.*

*Move Mary along the road as you say:*

**Mary left her home in Nazareth and travelled in haste to the hill country of Judea. She was going to visit her relative, Elizabeth who lived with her husband, Zechariah.**

*Move Mary off the road just a little way and say*

**Upon entering the house of Zechariah, Mary greeted Elizabeth.**

*Move Elizabeth towards Mary.*

**When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby within her moved.**

*Place your hand over Mary as you say:*

**Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth exclaimed, “Mary, blessed are you among women! And blessed is the baby growing within you!”**

*Place your hand behind Elizabeth as you say:*

**“I cannot believe that the mother of my Lord would visit me!”**

*Place your hand over Mary’s head and say:*

**“Blessed are you Mary, because you believed the angel’s message and you faithfully trust in God!”**

*Pause for a while before wondering with the students.*I wonder…

I wonder why Mary would have gone to visit her relative, Elizabeth.

I wonder why Elizabeth’s baby moved when Mary greeted Elizabeth.

I wonder how Elizabeth knew Mary was going to have such a special child.

I wonder what the women talked about.

I wonder if you find anything puzzling or amazing in this story.

**Resource Sheet 5**

**The birth of jesus**

 **(based on Luke 2:1-20)**

**You will need**

* Bible
* beige felt underlay
* brown felt road
* Nativity set: Joseph, Mary, donkey, baby Jesus, manger, stable, 2 shepherds, 3 sheep, 3 angels

*Children are seated in a semi-circle ready to listen to the story. When the children are ready carry the materials carefully from the story shelf to the story area, place them beside you and say*

*Place class Bible, open at Luke, in front of you with your hand on it.*

**This story comes from the Gospel according to Luke, which is in the New Testament section of the Bible.**

*Place Bible beside you.*

*Place the underlay in the middle of the space.*

*Place the road on top of the underlay.*

*Place Mary, Joseph and donkey on the road at the far end away from you.*

**In those days the Emperor Augustus decreed that all people should be registered in the town of their birth. Since Joseph was born in Bethlehem he had to go there.**

*Slowly move Mary, Joseph and donkey halfway down the road.*

**So Joseph travelled with Mary from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem to be registered.**

*Place your hand at the opposite end of the road to Mary and Joseph.*

**Bethlehem was a long way from their home in Nazareth and their child was expected to be born soon.**

*Continue to slowly move Mary, Joseph and donkey down the road to Bethlehem.*

**When Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, the town was very crowded.**

*Place stable to the side of the road. Move Mary, Joseph and donkey from the road to the stable.*

*Hold Jesus in your hand as you say*

**While they were there the time came for Mary to have her child. She gave birth to her firstborn son.**

*Place Jesus in the manger between Mary and Joseph.*

**Mary wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.**

*Place shepherds and sheep on the underlay away from the road and the stable.*

**Now nearby there were some shepherds living in the fields watching over their sheep by night.**

*Place an angel near shepherds.*

**An angel of the Lord stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. The shepherds were terrified!**

*Move the angel a little closer to the shepherds.*

**The angel said, “Do not be afraid… I am bringing you news of great joy for all people. To you, this day, in Bethlehem, is born the Messiah, the Lord!**

**This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”**

*Place more angels facing shepherds.*

**Suddenly a multitude of angels appeared, praising God saying,**

**“Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace.”**

*Move angels to your side. Move shepherds to the stable.*

**After this the angels left and the shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem. They found Mary and Joseph, and the child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in the manger just as the angels had promised.**

*Turn Mary and Joseph to face the shepherds.*

**The shepherds explained what the angels had told them about this child. Everyone was amazed.**

*Turn Mary to face the child Jesus.*

**Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.**

*Move the shepherds back to their fields.*

**The shepherds returned to their fields praising God for all they had heard and seen.**

*Pause for a while before wondering with the students.*

I wonder what the place was like where Mary had her baby.

I wonder what the words, “the glory of the Lord shone around them” mean/ or what that might look like.

I wonder how the shepherds found Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus in Bethlehem.

I wonder what it means that Mary “treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart”.

I wonder what you ponder in your heart.

**Resource Sheet 6**

# Nativity

The mistake we sometimes make

is in thinking

that Christmas occurs on 25 December

when actually

that is just the day

we’ve chosen to celebrate

all the Christmases

in our lives.

Christmas is a miracle that happens

whenever love and hope and wonder are brought into the world.

It can happen over a can of coke with a friend,

doing some messages for Mum

or at a picnic.

It can happen noisily, like when the kids come home;

or quietly, like the hush of prayer.

Christmas happens all year round in the little things people

do to help each other.

That’s when love is born and God-is-with-us.

And if you think about it,

love coming into the world

is what Christmas is all about.

In small groups:

* Decide what the author is saying about Christmas
* Talk about Jesus as God’s gift to each person.
* Discuss ways you can give yourself as a gift on Christmas Day.
* List ways you can make Christmas happen every day.

(Adapted from *The Best of Celebrate ©* Collins Dove 1989)

1. KWL, Teaching Companion 3a, p188 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. KWL, Teaching Companion, 3a, p115 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. KWL, Teaching Companion, 3a, p189 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)