

Opening prayer

December is typically a time when we are fully immersed in the holiday season, but do you know what has changed in our church since the last time we gathered? What would you say if I wished you a Happy New Year? Every once in a while in our program we will shed new light on elements of our faith that you may have forgotten, such as the new liturgical year.

ENCOUNTER

Since our last class we have started a new year in the church!!! Check out the following link to get a brief overview of what that means.

<https://teachingcatholickids.com/the-liturgical-year-a-journey-with-jesus/>

After reading the article above you know we are in the season of Advent. This is a joyous season of preparation.

Watch this video from busted halo

<https://bustedhalo.com/video/watch-advent-two-minutes>

This year we will be reading Mark's gospel throughout the year – there are three cycles or readings for our church. This is year B where we read the gospel of Mark. Believe it or not Mark's gospel does not begin with the birth of Christ, but instead with John the Baptist baptizing Jesus in the Jordan. Remember each of the gospels tell the story of Jesus' ministry but the audience for whom they were written is different. We will discuss this in more detail later in our program

The infancy narratives or the story of the birth of Christ are told in the gospels according to Matthew and Luke. Advent is the season where we prepare for the coming of Christ. It is the four weeks before Christmas. Need a refresher?

Watch this video and see if this is your reality of the infancy narrative?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suowe2czxcA>

Now let's see if we can go back to the source.

Read the following passages from Luke and Matthew. Pay attention to the tone and details.

Read Luke 1:26-38, 2:1-20

Jesus' Birth Foretold – Luke 1:26-38 (New American Standard Bible)

²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin ^[a] betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the ^[b] descendants of David; and the virgin's name was ^[c] Mary. ²⁸ And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord ^[d] is with you." ²⁹ But she was

very perplexed at *this* statement, and was pondering what kind of greeting this was. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; ³³ and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." ³⁴ But Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I ^[a]am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; for that reason also the ^[b]holy Child will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, even your relative Elizabeth herself has conceived a son in her old age, and ^[c]she who was called infertile is now in her sixth month. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, the Lord's bond-servant; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed

Luke 2:1-20

New American Standard Bible

Jesus' Birth in Bethlehem

2 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all ^[a]the inhabited earth. ^{2 [b]}This was the first census taken while ^[c]Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all *the people* were on their way to register for the census, each to his own city. ⁴ Now Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, ⁵ in order to register along with Mary, who was ^[d]betrothed to him, and was pregnant. ⁶ While they were there, the ^[e]time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a ^[f]manger, because there was no ^[g]room for them in the inn.

⁸ In the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock at night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord *suddenly* stood near them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. ¹⁰ And *so* the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; ¹¹ for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is ^[h]Christ the Lord. ¹² And this *will be* a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a ^[i]manger." ¹³ And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly ^[j]army of angels praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among people ^[k]with whom He is pleased."

¹⁵ When the angels had departed from them into heaven, the shepherds *began* saying to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem, then, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the ^[m]manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen *Him*, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it were amazed about the things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

Conception and Birth of Jesus – Matthew 1:18-25 (New American Standard Bible)

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the ^[a]Messiah was as follows: when His mother Mary had been ^[b]betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, since he was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her, planned to ^[c]send her away secretly. ²⁰ But when he had thought this over, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for ^[d]the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a Son; and you shall name Him Jesus, for ^[e]He will save His people from their sins." ²² Now all this ^[f]took place so that what was spoken by the Lord through ^[g]the prophet would be fulfilled: ²³ "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN WILL ^[h]CONCEIVE AND GIVE BIRTH TO A SON, AND THEY SHALL NAME HIM ^[i]IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." ²⁴ And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took *Mary* as his wife, ²⁵ ^[j]but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he named Him Jesus.

Matthew 2:1-16 New American Standard Bible

The Visit of the Magi

2 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, ^[a]magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ² "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." ³ When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where

the ⁴Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written ⁴by ⁴the prophet:

⁶ 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH,
ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH;
FOR FROM YOU WILL COME FORTH A RULER
WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'"

⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the magi and determined from them the exact ⁴time the star appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found *Him*, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him." ⁹ After hearing the king, they went on their way; and behold, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on ahead of them until it came to a stop over *the place* where the Child was *to be found*. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ And after they came into the house, they saw the Child with His mother Mary; and they fell down and ⁴worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And after being warned *by God* in a dream not to return to Herod, *the magi* left for their own country by another way.

The Escape to Egypt

¹³ Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord *appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to kill Him."

¹⁴ So ⁴Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. ¹⁵ He ⁴stayed there until the death of Herod; *this happened* so that what had been spoken by the Lord through ⁴the prophet would be fulfilled: "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON."

ENGAGE

Sacred scripture is foundational to our faith, yet even some of the most familiar stories are not what we think.

How many wise men are there in these stories?

What animals are mentioned?

Where is the little drummer boy?

Think about the different stories of the infancy narratives that you read above. Who do you most closely relate to?

Vulnerable like the Jesus?

Full of faith like the magi?

Trusting like Mary and Joseph?

Anxious and angry like King Herod?

Given the fact that we have just started a new year in the church let's reflect on what our faith means in the world today. In preparation for Father Lerner, please reflect upon questions you may have about God, being Catholic or your faith journey.

If you have thought of additional questions since our last class, please send them to me by November 22, and I will be sure to include them in the list being sent to Father Lerner.

EMBRACE

1. Commit to shopping at small local business or at a fair trade retailer such as

Serrv: serrv.org

Ten Thousand Villages: tenthousandvillages.com

Thistle Farms: thistlefarms.org

Project HaveHope – use this link for a

discount <https://projecthavehope.org/discount/HolidayShop>

13 One Stop Marketplaces for Ethical & Sustainable Shopping

<https://www.thegoodtrade.com/features/online-ethical-marketplaces>

The Little Market: <https://www.thelittlemarket.com>

2. Pick one charity you believe in and make a donation in someone's name. Be sure to do some research and find an organization that has had success with their targeted population.
3. Make Christmas cards and get them to the church by December 12 so Mrs. O'Neill on behalf of our class community.
4. Make Jesse tree this year with your family see the link below for details.
<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/activities/view.cfm?id=545>
5. **Make an Advent calendar or wreath or follow the bustedHalo.com Advent calendar on their website.**

Continue (or start) a Gratitude journal.

Conversation starters:

What is your favorite memory from past Christmases?

What is your favorite family tradition for Christmas?

What is one thing you can do to spread joy during the season of preparation?

What about this season fills you with joy and anticipation?

What surprised you most about reading the stories back to back?

Playlist within a playlist

I will wait – Mumford and Sons

Joy – Rend Collective

Glory – Matt Maher

Joseph's Lullaby – Mercy Me

Pentatonix – That's Christmas to me

Joy to the World – Chris Tomlin