

YEAR LEVEL	3 & 4
TITLE	Christmas - The Message of Joy and Peace
STRAND	CHURCH AND TRADITION
SUGGESTED DURATION	4-6 weeks
ENDURING QUESTIONS	What does the Church look like in our community? How can I be like Jesus in our community?



Unit Focus

In this unit students will be given the opportunity to explore Christmas as a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, where the main message is one of joy and peace. They will be encouraged to recognise that as members of a Christian community we are called to share this message with those in the wider world by showing goodwill to each other.

Achievement Standards

By the end of **Year Four**:

Students identify how the Church celebrates feasts and seasons of the liturgical year.

Unit Outcomes

By the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the story of the birth of Jesus in Luke’s Gospel.
2. Describe ways that we can foster the Christmas spirit of peace and joy in our world.

Key Understandings for Students

- At Christmas Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, God’s son and share the Christmas message of joy and peace through goodwill to all.
- Christmas is a season of joy that celebrates the story of God’s work among us.
- As Christians we are called to bring Christ’s peace and joy into the world.
- Christmas is a time to think about world issues, for example peace, and to consider how we can share the Christmas message.

Student Context

As students move through this level their understanding of themselves, their community and the wider world expands. They are less self-focussed and enjoy working collaboratively. Their reasoning ability takes an important step forward and, whilst still being very literal, they are developing the ability to understand different levels of meaning and hence appropriate symbols and symbolic actions. They have a better understanding of time and the sequence of events, therefore Scripture stories take on a new significance.

NB. When using the Infancy narratives in this unit the difficulty of explaining their literary forms needs to be taken into account. The emphasis should be on the cultural celebration for Christians and our identity as being part of the story of Jesus being present in the world.

Theological Background for Teachers

- The one to bring salvation is also called Saviour. Joseph was told that Jesus will save his people from their sins (Mt 1:21) and the angel announced to the shepherds the birth of a Saviour who is Christ the Lord. (Lk 2:12)
- The Infancy Narratives found in the gospels of Mt 1:1-2:23 and Lk 1:5-2:52 although not harmonious in every detail do agree that after being virginally conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was born of Mary in Bethlehem.
- The coming of Jesus at the First Christmas fulfilled the Old Testament preparation and was to bring saving revelation to all peoples on earth (Mt 2:1-12; Lk 2:30-32) (O'Collins & Farrugia, 2000, p. 120).
- The celebration of Christmas as the birth of Jesus Christ on 25 December is a Church feast of Western origin that replaced the pagan feast of the Unconquered Sun and eventually became common to all Christian Churches (except Armenian). The Roman liturgy allows for Mass to be said during the night (normally at midnight), at dawn and during the day to celebrate the threefold birth of the Son – in the bosom of the Father, in the womb of Mary, and in the heart of the believer (O'Collins & Farrugia, 2000, p. 42).
- The angels announce peace as a gift of God's favour. Augustus was revered for having established peace in the Empire in 29 BCE after a century of civil strife. But the Pax Romana is an exterior calm enforced by military power. True peace will come through Jesus (Jh 14: 27). (Karris, 2000, p. 942).
- For both the Old Testament and New Testament peace is more than freedom from war (Isa 2:4; Mic 4:3; Mt 26:52) *Shalom* is the comprehensive welfare given through union with God- in particular the saving peace associated with the Messianic Age (Isa 9: 1- 7; 11: 1- 9; 32: 15- 20) Jesus' followers are to proclaim peace, the message of eschatological salvation (O'Collins & Farrugia, 2000, p. 195).
- Believing that the God Jesus proclaimed is good, and can do only what is good, Christians look for signs of his goodness everywhere. We believe that wherever there is goodness, there is also the influence of God who is present.
- Followers of Christ seek to discover his goodness in the beauty, life, order and harmony of creation. We seek it also in others. We know that everything that is good can reveal something new about God (Education Committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, 1990, pp. 227- 228).
- Christian faith is mostly about the present. It concerns God revealing himself personally *today* to anyone who will listen and respond. It concerns the experience of Christ as Saviour *today*, the Christ who is present everywhere- but especially in his Church, wherever his members live and gather together in his name. He continues to dwell among people *today*, though under a different human form- through us, the community of

followers bound together by a shared faith handed down from the apostles (Education Committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, 1990, p. 228).

Scripture

Lk 2:8-20 The Shepherds and the Angels

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see- I am bringing good news of a great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is 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." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in a manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told to them.

Major Assessment Task & Rubric – Years 3 & 4

Students design a Christmas card where the image demonstrates an understanding of the story of the birth of Jesus in Luke's Gospel. The inside of the card must include a message of joy and peace.

OR

Students design a Christmas decoration which represents the story of the birth of Jesus in Luke's Gospel. Students write about their design choice, explaining how their decoration symbolises joy and peace and how this can be nurtured in our world. Students may use words or images from their learning within the unit.

Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

Focusing Activity

Read '*What Do You Wish For?*' (Jane Godwin)

What is your favourite Christmas wish from the story? Why?

Ruby 's wishes are about having a special time for her family and friends at Christmas. She wants Christmas to be peaceful and full of joy. What makes Christmas joyful for you?

What is your Christmas wish?

- Read the story of Jesus' Birth in Luke 2:1-21, using Godly Play. **(Appendix 1)**
- Explain the meaning of a census and why Mary and Joseph undertook the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Trace the journey on a map. Design a Kahoot or a Google Form to create a class census.

- Students read the scriptural text in KWL, Year 3, p144-145. Explore the feelings and emotions of the main characters. Focus on the message of the angels, especially on the words of the angels' announcement of joy and peace.
- Create a Word Wall to explore the meaning of the words, peace, joy and hope. Grow these definitions as the students understanding develops. A possibility to use this as a pre and post assessment task.
- Students brainstorm 'What is Peace?' Does it just mean not fighting or being mean? Records student responses.
- Students think about the concept of 'Joy'. Create a class Y Chart about Joy.
- Reflect on the peace and joy that Jesus brings to us. How can we respond to this gift of Jesus? What can we do?
- Discuss why the spirit of joy, peace and goodwill at Christmas should be a part of our everyday life, not just at Christmas. Create a banner for display at the school or Church.
- Students write an individual prayer or petition asking for the message of Joy and Peace come to all. Publish in the Parish bulletin, newsletter or end of year Mass.
- Brainstorm ways in which we can be people of joy and peace at Christmas. Display under the heading: **Christmas- A Time of Joy and Peace**
- Create a class display Christmas Tree. If possible, find and place a reasonably large dead tree branch in a container and fill with sand or stones. Wrap the container with red or gold paper or cloth. Using **Appendix 2**, students make angels. These may be hung on the branches of the tree.
- Students make a banner with the words **Peace on Earth! Joy to All!** to take home to display for Christmas.

Prayer Ritual

Gather students around the class Christmas tree.

Lead the students in the Christmas Tree prayer:

Lord Jesus,

Encircle this tree with your blessing.

May its twinkling lights remind us of the hope and promise of your coming.

May we find joy in the memories we share in its tinsel and trimmings.

May the presents we place beneath it be a sign of our appreciation of the gift of your presence among us.

We ask this in your holy name.

Amen.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Godly Play: Jesus' Birth in Luke 2:1-21

Appendix 2: Angel template