

Children's liturgy – Fourth Sunday of Advent (Year A)

Preparing the worship space

Colour: purple

Props: pictures of babies from around the world

Song suggestions: The angel Gabriel (686, Celebration Hymnal for Everyone)

Welcome: Today we hear how an angel appeared to Joseph to tell him what a special baby Jesus would be. We are going to be thinking about parents and babies from around the world.

Opening prayer: Loving God, as we wait for the birth of Jesus at Christmas, we give thanks for the wonderful gift of new life. We pray for all parents around the world and for their children, that they will be healthy, happy and love one another. Amen.

First reading (optional): Isaiah 7:10-14

Psalm: Ps 23:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Gospel acclamation everyone stands and sings the gospel acclamation together. Options include: 'Change your lives and believe in him', Christopher Walker; 'Halle, halle, halle' (Caribbean) from 'Sing With the World', Alison Adam & John Bell; 'Celtic Alleluia' (traditional).

Gospel: Matthew 1:18-24

Gospel reflection: What do you remember from the story you just heard?

In this story an angel comes to tell Joseph that everything will be all right and that Jesus is not just an ordinary baby, but is very special. He is the son of God.

How do you think Joseph feels in this story?

Who here has a baby brother or sister? What is their name? They need lots of looking after. Even though they are very small, babies need lots of things to make sure that they are happy. Can you think of some of the things that babies need? (Food, shelter, love and attention, sleep, etc)

No matter where in the world they are born, babies need the same basic things. Sometimes it is hard for families to provide all of these things because of what is happening around them. In Darfur, Sudan, families have had to leave their homes because fighting where they lived meant that it was dangerous to stay there. They now live in camps because they had nowhere else to go.

Why do you think it might be more difficult to look after a baby if you live in a camp, far away from home?

Health centres have been set up to help mothers and babies who live in the camps. Mothers bring their babies to get them weighed and measured. If a baby does not weigh enough, the doctor can give the mother special food to make sure the baby grows up fit and healthy.

How do you think the mothers feel knowing that there is somewhere they can go to check that their baby is ok?

God loves us all, even the tiniest baby. As we get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus, we think about all the other babies around the world and how special they are too.

In the coming week, perhaps you can keep babies, children and their parents around the world in your prayers.

Intercessions *You may want to ask the children to offer their own prayers or you can use the suggestions below.*

The angel told Joseph that Jesus would be a very special baby. Together we pray for all babies, children and parents around the world:

We pray for all babies and children around the world: that they may get the food, shelter and love that they need and grow up to lead happy and healthy lives. Lord, hear us...

We pray for all parents: that they may be able to give their children a safe, warm and loving home to grow up in. Lord, hear us...

We pray for our parish, families and friends: that remembering that God loves everyone around the world, even the tiniest baby, we may share that love with others and help to care for them. Lord, hear us...

Closing prayer: God of light, you sent your angel to tell Joseph that Jesus was a special baby. Help us to remember that all babies are special because they are all part of your family and you love us all. Amen.

Activity suggestions

Ask the children to colour in the optional accompanying illustration. On the back the children could draw a picture of a baby and all the things that it needs to grow up fit and healthy.

Ask the children to write a prayer for all babies, children and their parents.

Ask the children to go home and share all that have heard thought about today. During the week, ask them to find pictures of themselves as a baby. How have they changed? Can they recognise themselves? Ask them to also find pictures of their parents or other family members as a baby, or pictures of babies from around the world in magazines, newspapers or on CAFOD's website. Are there any similarities or differences between the pictures? If they have written a prayer, ask them to say it at home together during the week.