



## NATIVITY OF THE LORD

Year A

Isaiah 52:7-10

Psalms 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6

Hebrews 1:1-6

John 1:1-18

### Gathering

*(A large Christmas candle surrounded by seasonal greens, a Bible open to this week's gospel, a creche and small tea candles, one for each member are arranged on a table covered with red cloth. Christmas hymns play in the background as members arrive.)*

We celebrate Christmas: God's gift of his Son for our sakes, the reason why we give gifts to each other on this feast. Last week we reflected on God's call to Joseph and his response of mercy. When did you act with mercy this past week?

### Prayer

*(Members gather around the table; the Christmas candle is lit. The leader calls members to silent attention to the presence of Emmanuel, God with us. After a time of quiet, the prayer continues as follows.)*

All: All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

“And the Word  
Became  
Flesh”

Jn 1, 14



- I: Sing to the LORD a new song,  
for he has done wondrous deeds;  
his right hand has won victory for him,  
his holy arm.
- All: All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of  
God.
- II: The LORD has made his salvation known:  
in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice.  
He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness  
toward the house of Israel.
- All: All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of  
God.
- I: All the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation by our God.  
Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;  
break into song; sing praise.
- All: All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of  
God.
- II: Sing praise to the LORD with the harp,  
with the harp and melodious song.  
With trumpets and the sound of the horn,  
sing joyfully before the King, the LORD.
- All: All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of  
God.

Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6

*(A Christmas hymn is is played and members sing along.)*

## **HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL**

*(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading.)*

*(Special Note: After the proclamation of the first two Christmas scriptures,*

*the tea candles are distributed to the members. Members hold lit candles during the proclamation of the gospel and then return them to the table.)*

*Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.*

*When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. Pausing between them, the leader then poses these two questions: “**What draws you to this gospel?**” “**Where do you resist this gospel?**” The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)*

## **Reflection**

Before the creation of the world there was the timeless pre-existent Light, the Word that was and is God. The Christmas story in the gospel of John introduces us to the breathless moment when divine light broke into human existence through the Word made flesh. Jesus assumed our humanity in all its incompleteness and became subject to the effects of sin and death. The incarnation is the Christmas mystery of life, “the light of all people ... which enlightens everyone.”

The Son of God assumed our human life in order to accomplish our salvation in it. He came to teach us how to be holy, to be part of his mystical body by putting on his mind of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

The Bible reveals that God created everything through his Son, the eternal *Word*. By becoming incarnate Jesus re-created our fallen world, drawing from his pre-existent Light, making his origin our origin. Through faith in Christ we are born again from above. Matthew and Luke in their gospels present genealogies of the Davidic line that end with Joseph. John in his Christmas story presents us with *our* genealogy. We have become heirs with Christ. Mary is our Mother. Faith in Jesus brings us birth from God.

This transformation, made possible through our indwelling Christ, is the saving joy of Christmas. “The light shines in the darkness.” We are given

the “power to become children of God.” Jesus makes known the truth of the Father. By putting on the mind of Christ, we enter into the Light. This is the great mystery of Christmas. Through the grace and truth of the Light of the incarnation we realize that all the ordinary of human life is sacramental or as Thomas Keating puts it, all of life is “shot through with eternal implications.”

### **Questions for Reflection and Conversation**

- ◆ How does your life testify to *the light*?
- ◆ What keeps you from shining more brightly?
- ◆ How does living in the light put you at odds with secular society and perhaps even with your family and friends?
- ◆ How does Jesus reveal God to you?

### **HEARING THE GOSPEL’S LORD**

*(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: “What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?” “How are you/we being called to live in response to God’s word?” After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)*

### **Response in Action Suggestions**

- ◆ Share the light of Christmas with someone who has moved away from Christ or who never knew him by inviting the person to a festive meal in your home. Offer a simple prayer of gratitude for God’s gift in Jesus at the start of the meal.
- ◆ Set aside ten minutes each day this week for reflection and prayer. Discern in what dark corner of your life the Lord is trying to shine a light. Look at it squarely. Pray for the grace to remove the darkness by cooperating with God’s grace.
- ◆ Read *The Mystery of Christ* by Thomas Keating. The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 1987.

## Prayer

*(After a brief pause, the gospel or a portion of it, either of the other readings as appropriate or the responsorial psalm are proclaimed. The idea is to select a text that lends itself to inviting members to the time of silent prayer that follows. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: “What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?” “What do you say to him in response?” The community pauses for a full five minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment.*

*Following this sharing, members join in singing, "O Holy Night." The song may be available on the Internet When the song is complete, the prayer continues as follows.)*

Leader: In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word.

Hebrews 1:1-3

*(Members join hands and pray the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary and the Glory be. The session concludes with the sharing of some festive Christmas beverage.)*