



Stations of the Manger



For God so loved the world
that He gave His only begotten son
that whoever believed in him
would not perish, but have eternal life.

– John 3:16



STATIONS OF THE MANGER

The Stations of the Manger were developed for Advent and Christmas to draw attention to their true spirit and meaning. This is especially important in today's culture that often clouds the true intent and beauty of these seasons.

The Stations of the Manger can be done individually or in small groups in one sitting (as on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day), or can be done one per day, perhaps during Morning Prayer, beginning with Station 1 on December 17. This will put Station 9, The Birth of Christ, on Christmas Day.

These Stations can also be used to gradually construct a Nativity scene, adding appropriate pieces for each Station as indicated in the pages below. Suggested dates for these activities are included.

Christmas hymns have been suggested for each Station, but others can be used depending on personal preferences.

Enjoy the season and the love of Christ!

The Stations

1. In the Beginning (1st Sunday in Advent)
2. Prophecy of the Coming of the Lord (Wednesday after 1st Sun.)
3. The Lineage of Christ (2nd Sunday in Advent)
4. The Annunciation (Wednesday after 2nd Sun.)
5. The Angel Visits Joseph (3rd Sunday in Advent)
6. The Visitation (Wednesday after 3rd Sun.)
7. Travel to Bethlehem (4th Sunday in Advent)
8. Encounter at the Inn (Christmas Eve)
9. The Birth of Christ (Christmas Morning)
10. Shepherds Visited by an Angel (Christmas Evening)
11. Epiphany (Jan 6th)
12. The Flight to Egypt (Jan 7th)



Station 1. In the Beginning

First Sunday in Advent

Nativity Scene: Empty, no buildings, people or animals

Scripture: John 1:1–5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that has been made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not.¹

Reflection: In the beginning the world was perfect, and all things ran well. Complete love and harmony existed. But to have love, free will must also exist, and with free will comes choice. Some spiritual beings chose their own way; some humans chose their own way. As a result, God's creation became corrupted. It is God's plan to eventually return His creation to the state of perfect grace once again.

Prayer: Father of Jesus Christ, open our hearts to your Word and to the power of the Holy Spirit. Give us the love to discover Your will and strength to carry it out always; for you are light, forever and ever.² Amen.

Hymn(s): O Come, All Ye Faithful

Response: Reflect on your own life. Renew your commitment through your baptismal vows to follow God's path from this point on. Know that past sins will be carried by God so that you don't have to. Know that if you fall in the future, He will be there to pick you up and send you on your way again. Know that God is love and He wants you healed, not punished.



2. Prophecy of the Coming of the Lord

Wednesday after the 1st Sunday



Nativity Scene: A lone prophet figure can be added to the scene.

Scripture:

(Isaiah 7:14)

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a young maiden shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.

(Luke 1:68–79. Cantic of Zechariah)

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up for us a mighty savior, born of the house of his servant David. Through his holy prophets of old he promised salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives. And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.

Reflection: God’s plan for you and the world spans enormous amounts of time. If we listen closely, as the prophets of old did, we can sense God’s presence and that he will fulfill His promises.

“Salvation from our enemies” can also mean full relief from those spiritual things that plague our souls: pride, temptations, envy, discontent, greed, and others.

Prayer: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Hymn(s): O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Response: Send out Christmas cards this week to friends and relatives you don’t see that much. Include messages that contain the specific theme of the coming of Christ. The time of Advent is a time of preparation. Let us prepare!

3. The Lineage of Christ

Second Sunday in Advent.

Nativity Scene: A few people representing the lineage of Christ can be added to the scene.

Scripture: (Matt. 1:1–17)

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren; and Judah begat Perez and Zerah of Tamar; and Perez begat Hezron; and Hezron begat Ram; and Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon; and Nahshon begat Salmon; and Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab; and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; and Jesse begat David the king. And David begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Uriah; and Solomon begat Rehoboam; and Rehoboam begat Abijah; and Abijah begat Asa; and Asa begat Jehoshaphat; and Jehoshaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Uzziah; and Uzziah begat Jotham; and Jotham begat Ahaz; and Ahaz begat Hezekiah; and Hezekiah begat Manasseh; and Manasseh begat Amon; and Amon begat Josiah; and Josiah begat Jechoniah and his brethren, at the time of the carrying away to Babylon. And after the carrying away to Babylon, Jechoniah begat Shealtiel; and Shealtiel begat Zerubbabel; and Zerubbabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; and Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; and Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham unto David are fourteen generations; and from David unto the carrying away to Babylon fourteen generations; and from the carrying away to Babylon unto the Christ fourteen generations.

Reflection: Remember our ancestors and those who have passed from this life. They have given us much for us to have what we have today. Pray for that their souls rest in peace.

Prayer: May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. In your Name we pray, Amen.

Hymn(s): Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring

Response: Look at family photo albums and remember the blessings of those who came before us. Thank the Lord for those who have helped us get closer to Jesus. You may want to visit grave sites of those family members and friends who have died.

4. The Annunciation

Wednesday after the 2nd Sunday

Nativity Scene: The angel Gabriel can be added to the scene.

Scripture: (Luke 1:26–38)

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her, and said, Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you. But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God. And behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God.

And behold, Elisabeth your kinswoman, she also has conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that was called barren. For no word from God shall be void of power. And Mary said, Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word. And the angel departed from her.

Reflection: Mary received the most wonderful gift in the world, only so that she could share it with the world. She received the gift humbly and gracefully. She then passed it on to us in the most loving manner.

Prayer: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Hymn(s): Ave Maria

Response: Consider giving of your time or treasures to help others enjoy a fulfilling Christmas time, too. Donate clothing, food or money to organizations that can identify those truly in need. As things come your way as gifts, whether from God or from others, receive them gratefully.

5. The Angel Visits Joseph

Third Sunday in Advent

Nativity Scene: Another angel can be added to the scene.

Scripture: (Matt. 1:18–25)

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to divorce her privately. But when he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, you son of David, fear not to take unto you Mary your wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shall call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins. Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, And they shall call his name Emmanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us. And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife; and knew her not till she had brought forth a son: and he called his name Jesus.

Reflection: On the prompting of an angel, Joseph accepted Mary even though she would have been rejected by society for her “condition”. How often do we impose society’s standards on who is “acceptable” and who is not? Let us all try to look beyond someone’s “condition” and see Christ’s goodness in his or her heart. Let us begin healing our ills by accepting the diversity and variety we find in the people around us.

Prayer: Angel of God, my guardian dear,
To whom God’s love commits me here.
Ever this day be at my side,
To light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.²

Hymn(s): Breath of Heaven

Response: Explore how other cultures celebrate Christmas. What are the similarities you find? What are the differences? What can you learn from these differences?

6. The Visitation

Wednesday after the 3rd Sunday

Nativity Scene: Add a lone woman to the scene, representing Elizabeth.

Scripture: (Luke 1:39–55)

And Mary arose in these days and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah; and entered into the house of Zacharias and saluted Elizabeth.

And it came to pass, when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit; and she lifted up her voice with a loud cry, and said, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your salutation came into mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a fulfillment of the things that have been spoken to her from the Lord."

And Mary said, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For he has looked upon the low estate of his handmaid: For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is unto generations and generations on those who love him. He has showed strength with his arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart. He has put down princes from their thrones, and has exalted those of low degree. The hungry he has filled with good things; and the rich he has sent away empty. He has given help to Israel his servant, that he might remember mercy (as he spoke unto our fathers) toward Abraham and his seed forever."

Reflection: The bonds of family are so important. The coming of Jesus into the world emphasizes a much larger family; all who choose to become children of God are brothers and sisters. Let us love each other!

Prayer: Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! Hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Hymn(s): Mary, Did You Know?; What Child is This?

Response: Visit some friends or relatives you may not have seen for a while. Visit someone in a hospital or who is homebound. Bring them a blessing, a smile, a kiss, a compliment, a flower.

7. Travel to Bethlehem

Fourth Sunday in Advent

Nativity Scene: A donkey can be added to the scene.

Scripture: (Luke 2:1-5)

Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to enroll themselves, every one to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David; to enroll himself with Mary, who was betrothed to him, being great with child.

Reflection: Bethlehem means “House of bread” or “Place of food.” Let us remember that the bread of life that we need so much was provided for us in Our Lord and Savior, Jesus. Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem to give the world the spiritual food we crave.

Prayer: Blessed are You, Father, who gave us our daily bread in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Blessed is He who continually feeds us with the word of life. Blessed is the Holy Spirit, who brings us together at Christ’s table of love. Blessed be God now and forever. Amen.

Hymn(s): O Little Town of Bethlehem

Response: Let us pray for those who have to travel during this season. May their travels be safe and they find loved ones well at their journey’s end. Let us also remember all the animals and how they serve our needs, providing food, clothing and company. Let us treat all creatures with care and respect. Consider a donation to your local animal shelter to support their work.



8. Encounter at the Inn

Christmas Eve

Nativity Scene: Mary and Joseph are added to the scene.

Scripture: (Luke 2:7)

...there was no room for them in the inn.

Reflection: The closest many of us ever come to being homeless or having the smallest inkling of what it would be like to be homeless is not being able to find a room for the evening when on a vacation road trip. That is a far cry from what some people really have to endure. The world has sufficient bounty for everyone to have a clean place to sleep and take care of, a place to call their own that is adequate for their needs, a place where they can be with family and enjoy meals together. And yet, our world's economic systems result in some of us living in mansions while others in local shelters or cardboard boxes on the street.

Prayer: Lord, we ask You to bless this place where we are staying and all who enter therein. Be our shelter when we are at home, be our companion when we are away, and be our welcome guest wherever we may rest for the evening. And, at the last, receive us into the dwelling place You have prepared for us in Your Father's house, where You live forever and ever. Amen.²

Hymn(s): O Holy Night

Response: Let us remember the homeless. Through no fault of their own, many people find themselves without a shelter, without a place to call home. Pray for more economic equity among all peoples; pray that those more fortunate find it in their hearts to live more simply that they may share of their bounty and blessings. Consider donating time or money to local shelters, or organizations that help people into homes.



9. The Birth of Christ

Christmas Morning

Nativity Scene: The baby Jesus is added to the scene.

Scripture: (Luke 2:6–7)

And it came to pass, while they were there, the days were fulfilled that she would give birth. And she brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger...

Reflection: How awesome it is that our Creator would come down from heaven in the form of a human to intervene for us, to teach us, and to show us how to love. “For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) He lived the life of a human to show us that He understands our situation. He understands what we face and what we struggle with. His incarnation was an act of love. His gift to us was fulfilled on the cross, but it began for us on this first Christmas Day.

Prayer: Lord our God, You sent Your Son, the Light of the World, into the darkness that covered the earth and its peoples. May the brightness of his rising shine in the church, so that the nations may walk toward the light, Jesus, the Christ, our Lord. Amen.²

Hymn(s): Away in a Manger; Silent Night; Christ is Born

Response: This is a day of praise and thanksgiving! It is important to worship God both as a community and in your own heart. Use this day of worship and praise as a springboard to a new beginning for your life. Allow the Holy Spirit to enter you and let a new heart be born in you on this Christmas Day.

Perhaps this is a day when you can either begin or renew your commitment to spend more time each morning and evening with your Lord. Build stability in your life by meeting with Him at least twice a day. Hopefully this will grow so that He is with You constantly. Listen to what He might be telling you in the scriptures that you read, and in the circumstances He places before you each day. Listen to your heart!

And finally, let Him shape your life little by little, so that you can come to know, love and serve Him. And by doing His will in your life, you will receive the everlasting fruits of the Holy Spirit; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, gentleness, and self-control. (Gal. 5:22)

10. Shepherds Visited by an Angel

Christmas Evening.

Nativity Scene: Some shepherds and sheep are added to the scene.

Scripture: (Luke 2:8–20)

And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were very afraid. And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you: You shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, 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, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased. And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger.

And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying that was spoken to them about this child. And all who heard it wondered at the things that were spoken unto them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them.

Reflection: This whole passage could be summed up with a phrase from Psalm 46: “Be still and know that I am God.” How often the first words to us from heaven are not to be afraid – do not fear! We read this in scripture many, many times. We know, then, like the shepherds, that God is there, and all will be well.

Prayer: Dear Father, we beg You to make perfect all good things that are begun. We beg You to make perfect Christ’s life in us, that we may come to know, love and serve Him in a way You would bless. In Your Name we pray. Amen.

Hymn(s): First Noel; Hark! The Herald Angels Sing; It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

Response: The Christmas season extends up to Epiphany. Keep the spirit alive by continuing to do things suggested in this booklet. See the last page for additional activities that can be done over the 12 days of Christmas!

11. Epiphany

January 6th

Nativity Scene: The Wise Men and camels are added to the scene.

Scripture: (Matt. 2:1–12)

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him." And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ should be born. And they said unto him, "In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written through the prophet. And thou Bethlehem, land of Judah, Art in no wise least among the princes of Judah: For out of you shall come forth a governor, Who shall be shepherd of my people Israel."

Then Herod privately called the wise men, and learned of them exactly what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, "Go and search out exactly concerning the young child; and when you have found him, bring me word, that I also may come and worship him." And they, having heard the king, went their way; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him; and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Reflection: Even in the peacefulness of the Lord's birth, evil lurks to destroy. We must be watchful of that which seeks to harm; but we must not stop our life of service to God. God's love will be proclaimed throughout the world as evidence at the Epiphany.

Prayer: (Vidi Aquam)

I saw water proceeding out of the Temple; From the right side it flowed, Alleluia;
And all those to whom that water came shall be saved, and shall say, alleluia,
alleluia.

Hymn(s): We Three Kings

Response: Consider giving small gifts of gold, frankincense (incense), or myrrh (incense or oils) to someone special in celebration of the revelation of Christ to the world.

12. The Flight to Egypt

January 7th

Nativity Scene: An empty manger is all that can be seen; no people or animals remain.

Scripture: (Matt: 2:13-15)

Now when they (the wise men) were departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I tell you: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." And he arose and took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt did I call my son."

Reflection: Sometimes, in order to serve God, we must flee for a while, and not fight. Sometimes the time or situation is just not right to stay and fight. It may be better to pull back or go somewhere else to preserve or refresh oneself before reentering the fray. Jesus often went off alone to refresh himself, to reconnect with God – to "recharge" before he interacted with others again. If we listen carefully, the Holy Spirit will tell us when we need to withdraw for a while. When the time is right, He will call you back once again.

Prayer: Lord, how many of your children are torn from their homes, fleeing from oppression and danger? We ask that you be with them on their journey, to provide for them, and care for them; helping them to know that no matter where they may have to flee to, you will always be there to feed them with your love. And when they can return home, guide them back safely and help them to heal whatever situation they may find upon their return. In your Name we pray, Amen.

Hymn(s): God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

Response: Show a sign of love to those in exile because of troubles in their homelands. Write letters to governments and politicians to work for the freedom of those oppressed by slavery or illegal confinement. Support those groups providing aid and assistance to anyone fleeing oppression or tyranny in their country.

Also, it may be time for a personal retreat for you for a couple of days. Consider making a weekend retreat at your favorite retreat center or monastery.

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Other Advent and Christmas Activities:

- Attend the church of your choice
- Go on a silent Christmas retreat
- Prayer vigils
- Attend a Christmas play
- Go on a drive at night to see Christmas lights
- Bake Christmas goodies, put them in small packages and share them with others you meet during the day
- Visit those in assisted living situations or those who are home-bound
- Listen to Christmas music; attend a concert
- Play your own instrument
- Join a caroling group
- Volunteer at a local organization
- Make some ornaments by hand
- Use an Advent Wreath or Advent Calendar in your home

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Notes:

¹Scripture quotes are based on the American Standard Version.

²From the Glenstal Book of Prayer, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN.



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