



# Liturgy of the Word with Children

Te Ritenga o te Kupu hei ngā Tamariki

Prepared by the Liturgy Centre, Catholic Diocese of Auckland

## Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year A

Violet

*'God is with us'*

Romans 1: 2-4, Psalm 24, Matthew 1: 18-22

God sends a special messenger to Joseph in his dream, just as when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to tell her she would have a child. What did Joseph need to be told by this messenger? What was his response? We, too, are called to trust God and to do what is asked of us, just as Mary and Joseph did.

Today is the last Sunday in Advent and so we light the last violet candle on our Advent wreath.



### Leader's Preparation

In preparation for leading this celebration, begin by reading and reflecting on the Scriptures for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, starting with the Gospel. (You may choose to use or focus on one reading only, but remember that the Gospel may not be omitted.) Then look through the preparatory material that follows and familiarise yourself with the Liturgy Outline.

**Please Note:** During the Liturgy of the Word with Children the Scriptures are to be proclaimed from either the *Lectionary for Masses with Children* or from the *Contemporary English Version of the Bible* as approved by the New Zealand Bishops Conference. Scripture should not be proclaimed from loose sheets of paper during liturgy.

### GOSPEL

Matthew 1:18-24

This is how Jesus Christ was born. A young woman named Mary was engaged to Joseph from King David's family. But before they were married, she learned that she was going to have a baby by God's Holy Spirit.

Joseph was a good man and did not want to embarrass Mary in front of everyone. So he decided to quietly call off the wedding.

While Joseph was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, the baby that Mary will have is from the Holy Spirit.

Go ahead and marry her. Then after the baby is born, name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

So God's promise came true, just as the prophet had said,

"A virgin will have a baby boy, and he will be called Immanuel," which means "God is with us."

After Joseph woke up, he and Mary were soon married, just as the Lord's angel had told him to do.

Brothers and sisters:

Long ago God promised the good news by what his prophets said in the holy Scriptures. This good news is about his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ! As a human, he was from the family of David. But the Holy Spirit proved that Jesus is the powerful Son of God, because he was raised from death.

**Response: Let the Lord enter, he is king of glory.**

The earth and everything on it belong to the Lord.

The world and its people belong to him.

The Lord placed it all on the oceans and rivers. **R**

Who may climb the Lord's hill or stand in his holy temple?

Only those who do right for the right reasons,

and don't worship idols. **R**

*Scriptures from the Lectionary for Masses with Children (CEV)*  
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## *Reflection for Leaders*

Christmas is drawing very near, and it is time to consider how much or how little we are able to trust God when we have difficult situations to deal with. It can be very testing to let go in a confusing situation and trust God. Have there been times when you have done this, or have you felt that you needed to resolve things by yourself? What does this tell you? Make a decision to hand over some of your anxieties to God, rather than trying to fix things yourself. Are there times when you know that God is communicating with you about some decisions you have to make? How do you keep open to these? Have there been times, like Joseph, when you have acted as the result of a dream or an intuition? Advent is almost over and there is still time to be generous to others in need or who are lonely at this time of the year. Be alert to bless others during the week.

## *Background to the Readings for Leaders*

In today's Gospel, Joseph is faced with an agonising situation. He works out a way to resolve things, but in a dream God presents reassurance. Joseph's response is implicit and unhesitating trust in God despite the confusion and anguish. Many of the accounts that Matthew describes are from Joseph's perspective, whereas Luke tells the story through the eyes of Mary. All the difficulties and struggles that surround Jesus from the first show God's very tender protection of him from the outset, and these are the situations that Matthew describes and focuses on. Joseph is alerted and receives revelation of God's will in a dream. In biblical times dreams were a common way in which God communicated with human beings, and many famous people in the Hebrew Scriptures, such as Abraham, Jacob and Joseph for example, received instructions in this way. Today we understand that not all dreams are direct communications from God, but they can often alert us to the ways God speaks through other means – intuition, Scripture, church teaching, words of other people, our own imagination and thoughts for instance.

Joseph's immediate response was to trust God, and this example of obedience and faith shown by both Mary and Joseph are still models for us today in our own confusing times.

### *Images from the Readings*

- An angel came in a dream
- 'God is with us'
- Joseph's trust and faith
- Joseph's immediate obedience
- The good news promised long ago

### *Reflecting on the Readings with the children*

Before Sunday read over the suggested discussion points given in the Leader's Liturgy Outline. With the 8-12 year olds: First, listen to the children's own responses to the Reading/s and then, if needed, use some of the discussion starters suggested.

With the 5-7 year olds: You may choose to use the 'Echo Reflection' material provided after the Reading/s to reinforce the Gospel message with the children.

### *Suggested Focus*

Prepare a focus for the area where the children's Liturgy of the Word is to be held:  
*Violet cloth, Lectionary, a candle and the Advent wreath.*



## LEADER'S LITURGY OUTLINE

# Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year A

At a suitable moment after the Opening Rites, but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

### INVITATION – *Pōwhiri*

I invite the children to join in the procession for their celebration of the Liturgy of the Word.

#### To the Minister of the Word:

Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

Receive this candle as the light of Christ who is present in his Word.

### PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS – *Te Kapa o te Pukapuka Tapu*

### WELCOME – *Ko te whakatau*

**Leader:** O God, you sent an angel to reveal the coming of your son. Give us hope and help us to be ready to hear when he will come again.

**R** Amen.

### LITURGICAL ACTION – *Ko te Ritenga Karakia*

Today all the candles on the Advent wreath are lit. Sing the first verse of 'O Come, O Come Emmanuel' (AOV1:174; GA 285)

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.*



### First Reading: *Romans 1:2-4*

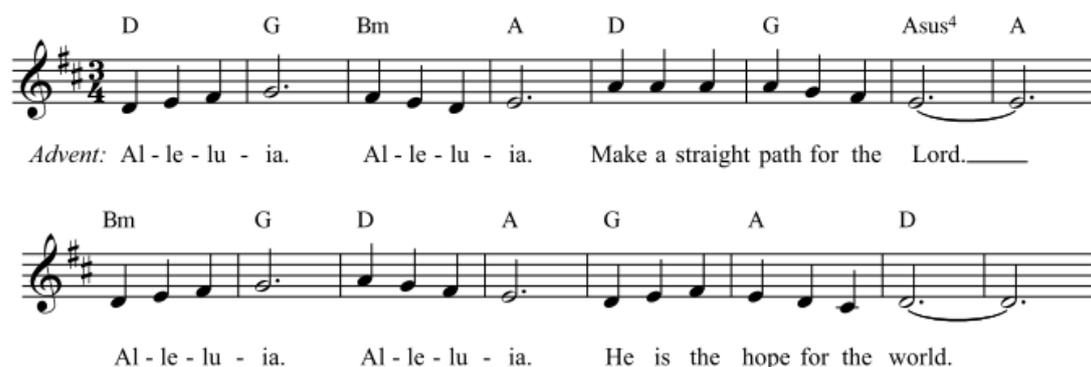
(if used)

The Word of the Lord / *Ko te Kupu a te Ariki*  
Thanks be to God / *Whakamoemiti ki te Atua*

### *Psalms 24*

(if used)

**Response:** Let the Lord enter, he is king of glory.



Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia. Make a straight path for the Lord.

Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia. He is the hope for the world.

### *Gospel: Matthew 1:18-24*

**Minister of the Word:** A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew  
**Children:** Glory to you, O Lord / Korōria ki ā koe, e te Ariki

**At the end of the Gospel:** The Gospel of the Lord  
**Children:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ / Kia whakanuia rā koe, e te Ariki, e Hēhu Karaiti.

## *REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH THE CHILDREN – Whai Whakaaro*

**8-12 year olds:** *Suggested Beginning:* A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

- Who do you think is the main character of the Gospel this week?
- What was Joseph's reaction when he found out that his fiancée Mary was going to have a baby? (confused, wanted to call off the wedding but didn't want to embarrass Mary)
- What changed his mind about what to do? (the angel in his dream with the message from God)
- What did Joseph do then? (married Mary, as the angel told him)
- What does this say about the sort of person Joseph was? (obedient, caring, trusted God)
- What can we learn from this? How can we be like Joseph?
- Can you remember the names that God's son was to be called? (Jesus and Emmanuel) These names mean 'God saves' & 'God is with us'. These names were a message from God that things would never be the same again because now 'God is with us'

**5-7 year olds:** The Echo Reflection at the end of this material can be used within the liturgy and can be given to the children as 'take home' material to share with their families to reinforce the Gospel message.

## PROFESSION OF FAITH – *Panui o te Whakapono*

We believe in God the Father,  
who made the whole world.  
We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God,  
who was born in Bethlehem  
and lived among us,  
who died on the cross for us,  
and rose from the dead.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit  
who brings life and love to us all.  
We believe that the Church is one family,  
and that one day  
we will share everlasting life  
with God in heaven.  
Amen.

## PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL – *Te Inoīnga o te Hunga Whakapono*

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

**Leader:** We are God’s children, so let us bring all our needs to God with hope and confidence:

- That the church will be a place where God’s presence ‘with us’ can be powerfully experienced

Let us pray to the Lord                    **R**    **Lord hear our prayer**  
or                    **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

- That our trust in God will be strengthened through times of confusion and difficult situations

Let us pray to the Lord                    **R**    **Lord hear our prayer**  
or                    **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

- For an attitude of generosity and care towards those who are sick, lonely and poor

Let us pray to the Lord                    **R**    **Lord hear our prayer**  
or                    **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

- For an openness to receive messages from God in unexpected ways

Let us pray to the Lord                    **R**    **Lord hear our prayer**  
or                    **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

**Leader:** God with us, help us to know your presence in our daily lives and look kindly on those for whom we pray. We pray this through Jesus Christ our Lord

**All:** **Amen.**

The children re-join the assembly before the prayers over the gifts.

# Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year A

## Echo Reflection

Matthew 1:18-24

Annunciation to Joseph

**People required:** Leader, Reader 1, Reader 2, Mary, Joseph, Angel.

**Note to leaders:** *In this reflection the children (chorus group) are simply required to repeat the last few words that Reader 1 speaks. It may be a good idea to have these phrases recorded on large signs for all children to read.*

**Leader:** The Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as Good News for ALL people. The birth of Jesus is recorded in Matthew's Gospel in this way:

**Reader 1:** Mary was engaged to Joseph.

**Chorus:** **To Joseph!**

**Reader 2:** But before they were married,

**Reader 1:** Mary discovered she was going to have a baby.

**Chorus:** **A baby!**

**Mary:** Joseph, I'm pregnant! How can this be?

**Reader 1:** Joseph was a good man who always tried to do the right thing.

**Chorus:** **The right thing!**

**Joseph:** This cannot be true! What will we do? Perhaps we had better call off the wedding. Let's just keep it all very quiet.

**Reader 2:** While he was thinking about this, an angel appeared to him in a dream.

**Angel:** Joseph, Joseph, Joseph! What are you doing? Get rid of those thoughts right now.

**Reader 1:** There's no need to worry.

**Chorus:** **There's no need to worry!**

**Reader 1:** The angel assured Joseph that everything would be okay.

**Reader 2:** The angel explained that it was through the power of God's Spirit that Mary was with child.

**Angel:** Hey Joe, it's a boy! Good News!

**Reader 1:** His name is to be Jesus!

**Chorus:** **His name is to be Jesus!**

**Reader 1:** When Joseph woke up, he knew just what to do!

**Chorus:** **He knew just what to do!**

**Joseph:** Will you marry me Mary?

**Mary:** Yes, Joseph, of course I will.

**Joseph:** Our son will be called Emmanuel.

**Reader 1:** 'Emmanuel' which means 'God is with us'.

**Chorus:** **God is with us.**

**Leader:** Jesus is good news for everyone!



From 'Just Imagine 4, Many Creative ways of presenting Scripture' written by Rina Wintour, Mountjoy Enterprises. [www.mountjoyenterprises.com.au](http://www.mountjoyenterprises.com.au). Available from the Liturgy Centre.