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## Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year A, Intermediate

Submitted by lectionaryadmin on Thu, 07/18/2013 - 20:00

### **Intermediate Session**

Isaiah 7:10-14

Matthew 1:18-24

## **Opening Prayer**

Let us pray.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.

Blessed are you among women,

and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,

pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

Amen.

### **Opening Life Reflection**

On this Fourth Sunday of Advent our theme is the virgin birth of Jesus. Begin today's session by inviting the children to create a "Joy" banner for a doorknob. Provide felt, glue, yarn and scissors and have the children cut large letters for the word "JOY" out of felt. Then have them glue the letters vertically on a half of a sheet of felt cut vertically. Fold the top of the felt over a string of yarn cut 12" long and glue. When complete, the banner can be tied over any doorknob. Discuss:

- What is joyful about the birth of Jesus?
- How does your family prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus?
- How does our Church prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus?

Allow time for discussion. Today we joyfully celebrate God's coming into the world through the birth of Jesus. We thank God for coming to live among us.

## **Listening to the Word of God**

In the Old Testament reading listen to the prophet Isaiah tell about the coming birth of a child.

Read Isaiah 7:10-14.

Allow for silence.



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## Scripture Discussion Starters

- Why does Ahaz not want to ask God for a sign?
- What sign will God give the people?
- What does the prophet Isaiah tell about the coming birth of a child?

In today's gospel listen to how the story of the birth of Jesus begins.

Read Matthew 1:18-24.

Allow for silence.

- How does Mary come to be with child?
- What does Joseph plan to do at first?
- Why does Joseph change his mind and decide to take Mary as his wife?
- What does the angel of the Lord tell Joseph?

## Scripture Background

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings.

In today's Old Testament reading the prophet Isaiah tells the people that they will be given a sign of God's love. The sign is the birth of a child to a young girl. The name of the child is to be Emmanuel, which means "God is with us." The people hopefully expected the prophet's word from God to come true within a short time. But today, Christians understand this passage to be a foretelling of the virgin birth of Jesus.

In the gospel today, Joseph is gently urged to trust God in a time of uncertainty and fear. Mary is found to be with child and such a pregnancy was viewed as a breach of sacred law at the time. Joseph first decides to divorce her quietly, but then an angel of the Lord appears to him in a dream. Joseph listens to God's message and plans to take Mary as his wife, believing that the child in her womb is conceived through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph is a descendent of David, Joseph's acceptance of Mary gives Jesus a place in the family line of David.

Joseph is told by the angel of the Lord to give the child the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. The name Jesus means, "God saves," which indicates the child's mission. In this gospel the words of the prophets are fulfilled in the miraculous events surrounding the conception and birth of Jesus.



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## Questions for Deeper Reflection

- What helps you to trust God in times of uncertainty and fear?
- What do you think it was like for Joseph to obey God's call?
- What does the name Jesus mean?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the Gospel in Life.]

## Doctrinal Discussion Starters

### Virgin Birth

Virgin birth describes the entrance of Jesus into this world. Catholics believe that the Holy Spirit is responsible for Jesus' conception in the womb of Mary. The miracle of Jesus' birth reveals God's power and grace breaking into the world.

The Catholic Church teaches that the virginal conception emphasizes the belief that the Messiah has only one father—his heavenly Father. Therefore, Jesus is truly God. He has an earthly mother, Mary, and therefore is also truly human.

Mary wholeheartedly accepted God's plan of salvation. The virgin birth reveals the miraculous action of God in Jesus' entrance into this world. Through the birth of Jesus, God has come to live among us. God is with us.

- Why is the virgin birth a miracle?
- Why do we believe that Jesus is truly human and truly God?
- How does listening to the story of Jesus' birth help you to celebrate Christmas?

## The Gospel in Life

How can you joyfully celebrate the birth of Jesus this Christmas?

### Connecting to Faith First® Legacy Edition

At Home Family Guide, theme 24

Grade 4, page 245 parish and page 355 school

Grade 5, page 245 parish and page 355 school

Grade 6, page 245 parish and page 355 school



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