

Advent People – Waiting for the Prince of Peace

In this unit students learn about Advent People in the Old Testament and how they waited for their Messiah, the Prince of Peace. They examine some of the symbols of the Jesse Tree, and reflect on their experiences of peace in light of the Christian understanding of this concept. Students use the Christian understanding of peace to plan actions to highlight and promote peace in their classroom, school environment and their own lives. They plan and participate in Advent Prayer and a Nativity Play.

DOCTRINAL FOCUS

In planning to teach this unit the following references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are recommended:

#2305 Earthly peace is the image and fruit of the *peace of Christ*, the messianic Prince of Peace. (Christ) reconciled men with God and made his Church the sacrament of the unity of the human race and of its union with God. ‘He is our peace’. He has declared: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers’.
(See *Compendium #481 What is peace in this world?*)

#2466 In Jesus Christ, the whole of God's truth has been made manifest. ‘Full of grace and truth’, he came as the ‘light of the world’, *he is the Truth*.
(See *Compendium #521 What is one's duty towards the truth?*)

#526 Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us. Christmas is the mystery of this ‘marvellous exchange’:
O marvellous exchange! Man's Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity.

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

Peace on earth: good will to all. This is the central message of Christmas. This is the kind of world Christians prepare for in Advent. How might the secular world challenge this way of living in Advent?

The people of Israel waited for a Messiah, a Prince of Peace. For Christians, Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace.

In Luke's Gospel we are shown that the infant Jesus will be the bearer of a different kind of peace. In Jesus Christ we see that peace is concerned with restoring right relationships and walking with those who are marginalised or alienated, bringing wholeness and salvation. How is your life an expression of Christian peace? Where are the places in your own life and in the broader community that yearn for peace this Advent?

Pope Paul VI tells Catholics, ‘Excessive economic, social and cultural inequalities among peoples arouse tensions and conflicts, and are a danger to peace’ (1967).

Mother Teresa tells us, ‘If we have no peace it is because we have forgotten we belong to each other’.

What can you do during Advent to bring forth peace in your own life or in the broader community? As part of waiting and preparing for Christmas how can you enable students to contribute their skills and gifts to support others in the community?

LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Commercialism may disguise the central message of Christmas. *How can you assist students to connect the Christmas message of peace with their lived experiences? What do your students understand by peace? What kind of experiences do they associate with peace? What is their vision for a peaceful classroom, peaceful friendships or a peaceful world?*

Students are familiar with symbols and rituals of the Advent season. Many live in a world of immediacy and are challenged by the need to wait. *What experiences do students have of waiting for something highly desired or of preparing for a great occasion?*

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Lk 2: 1–20

Luke's presentation of Jesus Christ's birth is a rich theological tapestry, and shows his skill as a writer in bringing together reliable traditions in his Infancy Narrative. This passage introduces eight of the themes which run through his gospel: food, salvation, grace, today, joy, lowliness, peace and God's universal offer of salvation. It establishes Jesus Christ as the Messiah, Christ and Lord in the line of David for whom the Jewish people had waited so long.

The prophet Isaiah, who lived through a period of great stress and upheaval in Israel's history, says of the Messiah: 'His name will be called Prince of Peace'. He will be the one who brings peace, the one who accomplishes peace, the one who gives peace and reigns in peace. At the birth of Jesus Christ angels proclaim 'peace on earth'; as Jesus leaves the supper room to enter into his Passion and death, his gift to his disciples is peace. When he greets his disciples after his resurrection it is with words of peace. Yet the world Jesus entered was just as fraught with unrest and upheaval as was Isaiah's world. The vast Roman Empire spread across the Mediterranean from the Iberian Peninsula (Spain) to Syria and Judea – an area comparable to the area of Australia. Over this empire, peace (Pax Romana) was brought about by suppression and oppression, and maintained by military force, the rule of law and the flow of commerce. It all sounds very familiar.

The helpless infant is an image in stark contrast to the powerful Roman ruler, Caesar Augustus. In Luke's Gospel we are shown that the infant Jesus will be the bearer of a different kind of peace. He will restore right relationships and walk with those who are marginalised or alienated, bringing wholeness and salvation. There is no room for Mary to give birth in the normal traveller's lodging, she must go outside the town; and the manger suggests a stall for animals. Jesus' birth therefore takes place on the margins; the beginning of a pattern we will see many times in the gospel. The poor shepherds will be the first to experience the hospitality of God and 'the peace the world cannot give' (Byrne, 2000).

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Decorate the prayer space in Advent colours. Add an Advent wreath and a Jesse Tree (a small dry branch in a pot of sand can be used for this purpose). Light the candles on the wreath before each prayer time.

- During Advent establish a pattern of morning or afternoon prayer. Some suggestions include:
 - A hymn or chant, e.g. ‘Come Lord Jesus’ or ‘Wait in Joyful Hope’ (Br Michael Herry, *Sing Spirit, Sing Life*, Marist Brothers Music).
 - A reading from Scripture, e.g. Mt 3: 1–3.
 - A response, e.g. one of the psalm phrases from *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 3, Chapter 18, p. 146.
 - A time of silent reflection.
 - Repetition of the chant or psalm phrase.

- Gradually decorate the Jesse Tree. Choose a few biblical individuals on whom to focus, e.g. Abraham, Noah, Ruth, David, John the Baptist, Joseph and Mary. Sing the verses related to each individual from the hymn ‘God of Abraham’ (Bernadette Farrell, *God Beyond All Names*, OCP Publications).

- Closer to Christmas set up a Nativity scene in the prayer space. Gather around it for a time of *Lectio Divina* (sacred reading). Reverently read the text from Lk 2: 1–20 and invite the students to choose a word or short phrase from the reading. Invite them to close their eyes and be still, aware of their breathing, and introduce the word or short phrase silently into their meditation. Allow one or two minutes of silence for this. Conclude by reading the final two verses again (Lk 2: 19–20).

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 3: Chapter 18, Seasons and Celebrations.

Faith concepts: story, seasons, time, waiting, peace, customs.

Seeking understanding:

Who are Advent people?
 How can Christians prepare for Christmas?
 What does Christmas mean to me?

Understandings:

The people of Israel waited for the Prince of Peace to bring them into a new friendship with God and with others. The Christmas story reveals the coming of the Prince of Peace to the world. For peace in the world people need to share what they have, respect the rights and dignity of each person and to be fair and just. Jesus' birth makes a difference to the world and Christians celebrate this at Christmas. There are different traditions and customs for preparing for and celebrating Advent and Christmas.

Scripture Text: Lk 2: 1–20.

Unit specific learning:

Students will learn about	Students will learn to	Students will undertake to
<i>Knowledge and Understanding</i>	<i>Reasoning & Responding</i>	<i>Personal & Communal Engagement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family and religious customs and traditions during Advent and Christmas. Some of the symbols of the Jesse Tree, the people of Israel they represent and the stories of these people, e.g. Abraham, Noah, Ruth, David, Isaiah, Mary of Nazareth. How the Old Testament title 'Prince of Peace' may apply to Jesus Christ. The setting, context, events and main characters of Lk 2: 1–20. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect on their experiences of peace in light of the Christian understanding of peace. Represent their own ideas and thinking about the image of Jesus Christ as Prince of Peace. Evaluate their own ideas about Advent and Christmas in light of Christian beliefs and practices during these seasons. Apply and live the Christian understanding of peace in the classroom or playground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be part of a Nativity play. Participate in Advent prayer. Plan peaceful goals for the classroom and themselves. Participate in prayer around their Advent Table. Make choices and set goals for promoting a peaceful classroom and/or playground.

PHASES OF STUDENT INQUIRY

Additional Reading for Teachers	Orientation to Inquiry	Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning
<p>Advent: The first season of the Church year. It is the season of longing and waiting as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, God-with-us. Advent celebrates the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, into human history. The challenge is to remember that God is constantly with us and close to us. The Advent season is one of promise and fulfilment. It is a celebration of past, present and future.</p>	<p><i>What do students already know, think or feel in relation to the topic? What are students' questions about the topic? What experiences and reflections can we offer students to become engaged with the topic?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting the Scene Prior to the unit starting, set up 'I Wonder' prayer table. Introduce gradually over Advent a tree branch, baby, picture of a prince, bible, key word – Peace, Advent candles. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – I wonder why this tree branch is in our classroom? – I wonder why this baby is in the prayer space? etc. <p>In the last week of Advent add a nativity scene to the</p>	

<p>Readings and practices of the Advent season emphasise both penitence and the joyful expectation of the Lord's coming. During this period violet vestments are worn by the clergy (rose vestments are also acceptable on the Third, or Gaudete Sunday), further emphasising the theme of Repentance.</p> <p>The Advent wreath has become part of our Catholic tradition. However, the actual origins are uncertain. There is evidence of pre-Christian Germanic people using wreaths with lit candles during the cold and dark December days as a sign of hope in the future warm and extended-sunlight days of spring. In Scandinavia during winter, lighted candles were placed around a wheel, and prayers were offered to the god of light to turn the wheel of the earth back towards the sun to lengthen the days and restore warmth.</p> <p>By the Middle Ages the Christians adapted this tradition and used Advent wreaths as part of their spiritual preparation for Christmas. After all, Christ is 'the Light that came into the world' to dispel the darkness of sin and to radiate the truth and love of God (cf. Jn 3: 19–21). By 1600 both Catholics and Lutherans had more formal practices surrounding the Advent wreath.</p>	<p>prayer table, or gradually introduce the sheep, shepherds, etc. from Luke's Infancy Narrative, and celebrate prayer.</p> <p>Advent can also be a school activity where prayer takes place.</p>	
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<p>The Advent wreath is traditionally adorned with one pink and three purple candles. The purple candles symbolise prayer, penance and preparatory sacrifices and good works undertaken at this time. The rose candle is lit on the Sunday of rejoicing. The faithful have arrived at the midpoint of Advent. The circle symbolises the continuity of God's love.</p>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graffiti Wall This wall is used for the three focus themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Waiting/Advent – Peace/gospel message – Customs/Christmas These are completed as the questions arise from the following tuning-in activities. Students can choose questions that are vital or relevant to themselves, and write in their journals. 	<p>Assessment for Learning Journal entries: These tasks will indicate students' prior knowledge and experiences of Advent, peace, Christmas and tradition, and demonstrate their inquiry questions.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Brainstorm Students are divided into groups, and each group is given the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – When do you wait? – What do you wait for? – How do you feel when you wait? – Who are the people you know who wait? Share responses with the class and display answers. Each student enters a response in their journal. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acrostic Poem Students use the word PEACE to describe the meaning of peace, using an acrostic poem. These poems can be displayed around the room. 	Assessment for Learning The poems will indicate students' initial understanding of peace.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause and Effect The following activity is to lead on to answer the questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What are traditions? – What are customs? – What do they mean to you and your family? <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;">What if all birthdays were banned in your home for one year?</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;">How would this affect you?</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;">How would this affect your family?</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;">What traditions would be missed?</div> <p style="text-align: center;">Students write in their journals their understanding of tradition.</p> 	
Additional Reading for Teachers	Development <i>What experiences and religious texts will provide new learning for students? What skills will students need in order to work with these resources? What strategies and tools will enable students to think and reflect on these experiences and texts? How will students process their thinking and learning?</i>	Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning
The Jesse Tree tradition: The Jesse Tree is a pictorial summary of the stories of the Old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are Advent People? Story of the Jesse Tree 	

<p>Testament people who longed for and waited for salvation through the Messiah, the Prince of Peace. Each symbol on the tree represents a significant person from the Old Testament, culminating in Jesus Christ.</p> <p>For printable symbols go to: www.rca.org/worship/material/advent/total.html</p> <p>Advent People include: Isaiah: The first of the major Old Testament prophets. He predicted the coming of the true Messiah as the suffering servant.</p> <p>John the Baptist: The son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, who was Mary’s cousin. He became the great prophet who preached the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and baptised many people in the Jordan, including Jesus.</p> <p>Mary: The Mother of Jesus Christ. She accepted God’s invitation to be the mother of the Messiah and waited for the birth of her son, the Son of God.</p>	<p>Students investigate the story of the Jesse Tree and the significance of the symbols. Students are introduced to the Jesse Tree through pictures/posters. Brainstorm questions relating to the Jesse Tree.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Inquiry The teacher prepares a box of appropriate Advent people and symbols from the Jesse Tree. Students are grouped and each group selects a symbol from the Jesse tree, i.e. an Advent Person. Each group researches the chosen symbol/Advent person. <p>The following questions might guide the research as well as students’ own questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – When and where did the person live? – What are some of the important events in the person’s life? – How might this event look in a modern-day setting? – What might have happened if this person hadn’t acted or spoken as they did? – What were the strengths and weaknesses of this character? • Sharing of Findings Brainstorm ways of presenting students’ findings, e.g. 3D model of symbol, slide show, poster or dramatisation. <p>Display work around the class Jesse Tree.</p> • Reflecting on Learning: 3 Stars and a Wish Students list three new things they have learned and identify one thing they wish to 	<p>Assessment of Learning The sharing of findings will enable teachers to collect evidence of what students understand about individuals among the people of Israel who waited for a Messiah.</p> <p>Assessment as Learning This task will enable students to reflect on and monitor developments</p>
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	know more about. Share with the class.	and gaps in their understanding.
<p>The word peace is from the Latin <i>pax</i>, meaning tranquillity of mind. The people of Israel use the word <i>shalom</i> as a wish for peace. Christians use the greeting 'peace be with you' as a way of blessing each other with the peace of Christ.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Peace? Christmas Card Sorting Students bring old Christmas cards and cut out the headings, images and wishes. Students sort the words/images under headings, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Images: stable, trees – Feelings: happy, joyful – Names for Jesus: Emmanuel, the Lord – Wishes: peace, joy. <p>What messages do these cards, symbols, words and pictures give to us about Christmas? Why do Christmas cards give these messages?</p> • Scripture Read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Year 3, Chapter 18, pp.142–143. Write up Isa 9: 6–7 on a scroll of paper. Give each student a copy of the text. Students choose four names given to Jesus in the Isaiah text and illustrate. Students explore the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What did peace mean to Isaiah? – What does peace mean to us? – What stops peace in our lives? – Jesus the Prince of Peace: what does this mean to me? <p>To explore and respond to the above questions students choose from a variety of activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Circle time. – Think – Pair – Share. – Draw two peaceful times in their lives, and 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – two people who help them feel at peace. – Make own symbols of peace to hang on the Jesse Tree. – Y-chart: A just and peaceful world – looks like, feels like, sounds like. – Peace means to me ... (worksheet 'Road to Peace' in <i>Great Gifts Activity Book</i>, Monica O'Brien, pp. 22, 23). <p>Students list three things they can do to bring peace into someone else's life.</p>	<p>Assessment as Learning This task will record students' understanding of peace in the world and in their lives.</p>
<p>Christmas is the feast that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. The Christian Church placed the feast on 25 December, a date probably chosen to replace a pagan feast of the Roman sun god. Christians believe that Jesus was born in humble circumstances to a poor but respected family; the first witnesses to his birth being simple shepherds (in Luke's Gospel). From these humble beginnings the Son of God fulfilled the Scriptures as the Messiah described in Isaiah.</p> <p>In the time of Jesus shepherds were extremely poor and sometimes even despised. They usually lived in the countryside with their animals. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus' birth is announced to them first. Immediately he is seen as good news for the poor and outcast.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tradition at Christmas What is Christmas? How do we celebrate Christmas? Students illustrate: 'This is my family's Christmas', and complete these sentences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At Christmas my family always ... – At Christmas we ... – The thing I remember most about Christmas is ... – My favourite Christmas carol is ... – The best thing I remember about Christmas is ... – The thing I don't like so much is ... • Scripture: Lk 2: 1–20 <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Year 3, Chapter 18, pp. 144–145. Use dramatisation to tell the Scripture narrative. Identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – main characters – main events 	

<p>The angels' announcement is sung in the <i>Gloria</i> in the Church's liturgy every Sunday.</p> <p>Bands of cloth were used in ancient times to wrap the baby tightly. Luke's reference here may also allude to Jesus' body being wrapped in a linen cloth after his death.</p> <p>A manger is a trough or box of carved stone or wood, used to hold food for animals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – setting (locations) – context (what has happened before and after this particular story) – important words or phrases – symbols <p>Ask students to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – I wonder why the shepherds were the first to hear the news of Jesus' birth in Luke's Gospel? – I wonder what Mary felt and thought as she wrapped her baby in 'bands of cloth' and put him to sleep 'in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn' (Lk 2: 7)? – I wonder where this story would take place in our world today? – I wonder what the message of this story is? <p>Students can present a play, a liquid picture, freeze frames, etc. to retell Luke's Infancy Narrative. Students choose songs, carols, significant symbols and key words from the Scripture text.</p>	<p>Assessment as Learning This task will indicate students' learning of the Christmas story through Luke's Gospel.</p>
<p>Additional Reading for Teachers</p>	<p>SYNTHESIS <i>How will students demonstrate their understandings, beliefs, values, skills and feelings in relation to the topic? How will students take action based on their learning? What strategies and tools will enable students to discern their action, to plan and implement action and to evaluate their action?</i></p>	<p>Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Image of the Prince of Peace Students make posters to illustrate the message of Jesus Christ as the Prince of 	<p>Assessment of Learning This task will demonstrate how students integrate their</p>

	<p>Peace, to be displayed throughout the school.</p> <p>This could also be presented as a stained glass window design, as a rap chant to be performed at an assembly or Christmas concert, or as a clay or plasticine sculpture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Create a Vision</p> <p>Students connect their understanding of the concept of peace in light of new learning with their own experience of the classroom climate.</p> <p>Create a vision (plan) for a peaceful classroom and/or playground:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What does it look like, sound like, feel like? – What do we do already that makes for a peaceful classroom or playground? – What are some of the things that stop our classroom from being more peaceful? – How can we make our classroom/playground more peaceful? – What steps can I take to do this? <p>Journal Entry</p> <p>Students compose their own individual goals for a peaceful classroom following their findings.</p> <p>Scripture Play</p> <p>Students present their interpretation of Lk 2: 6–7 for the school, parish or a community group.</p> 	<p>understanding of Christian peace with their understanding of Jesus Christ.</p> <p>Assessment of Learning</p> <p>This task will demonstrate how students can apply and integrate the Christian approach to peace in their own lives.</p> <p>Assessment of Learning</p> <p>This journal entry will indicate students' understanding of peace and goodwill to their classmates and the school community.</p>
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RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Year 3: Chapter 18, Seasons and Celebrations.

Teacher Resources

Wintour, R 2001, *Sacred Celebrations for Advent and Christmas Year A*, Mountjoy Enterprises, Brisbane.

O' Brien, M 1998, *Great Gifts Activity Book*, Peter Townsend Willow Production, Australia.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 3 standards.

Students identify with biblical characters and people in the past and present Church by making inferences about their actions, feelings and motives. Students evaluate their choices and actions by reflecting on Scripture and Church teaching.