

## EXPLORING THE CHRISTMAS GOSPEL AT HOME

# THE SHEPHERDS

### EXPLORING CHRISTMAS DAY'S THEME

#### *Reflecting on the Gospel*

##### *Nativity (Luke 2: 1-14)*

Luke's account of the nativity speaks of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem, of there being no room in the inn, and of Jesus being placed in a manger. Luke also gives prominence to the shepherds. The birth of Jesus went neither unnoticed nor uncelebrated, because the shepherds were there to pay homage. In the Christmas tradition the shepherds have come to represent the ordinary people of first century Palestine, people whose lives the Saviour was born to change.

Our image to stimulate reflection on this passage is *the shepherds*.

#### *Extracts from the Gospel passage (Luke 2: 8-11)*

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields,  
keeping watch over their flock by night.

Then an angel of the Lord stood before them,  
and the glory of the Lord shone around them,  
and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them,  
'Do not be afraid; for see –

I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:  
to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour,  
who is the Messiah, the Lord.'

#### *Gospel prayer*

Lord Jesus Christ,  
the shepherds rejoiced at your birth.  
Accept the praise of our hearts,  
as we offer them to you in joy;  
now and always.  
Amen.

## READING THE GOSPEL FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

### Luke 2: 1-14

#### The Birth of Jesus

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

#### The Shepherds and the Angels

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth 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 heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'

## **ENGAGING WITH THE THEME AT HOME**

### ***Reflecting and meditating***

Reflect on Luke's account of the nativity (Luke 2: 1-14):

- what details in the passage catch your attention?
- what big ideas does the passage spark in your mind?
- what most touches your heart in the passage?
- what most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage?

### ***Thinking and talking***

- what do you understand about the political context of the registration?
- what is the significance of Joseph going to Bethlehem?
- what do you make of the place of the shepherds?
- how do you interpret the place of the manger?
- how can we best understand the narrative for today?

### ***Using your Bible***

Explore passages in the Old Testament that resonate with Luke's account of the birth of Jesus:

- Psalm 103: 19-21
- Psalm 148: 1-2
- Isaiah 7: 14
- Isaiah 9: 6
- Micah 5: 2-5

### ***Exploring online***

- explore shepherds and the birth of Jesus
- explore classic art of the shepherds at Jesus' birth
- explore shepherds in the time of Jesus

### ***Drawing on experience***

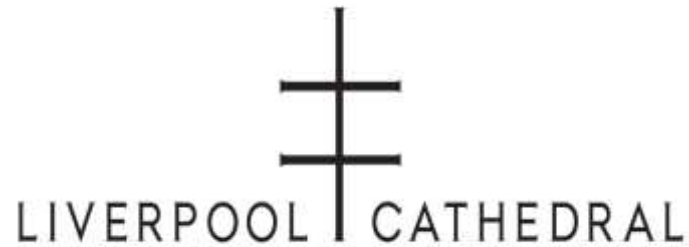
- reflect on your experience of shepherds in today's world
- reflect on your experience of shepherds in the nativity narrative
- reflect on occasions when you, like the shepherds, have been caught up in heavenly music

## CHRISTMAS DAY (YEAR B) FRIDAY 25 DECEMBER 2020

### *Creating and making*

- create a poster illustrating the shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night
- create a nativity scene with the shepherds coming to the manger
- create a collage of shepherds from Christmas cards
- create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the shepherds finding Jesus

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## **EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME**

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to [Nelson.Pike@liverpoolcathedral.org.uk](mailto:Nelson.Pike@liverpoolcathedral.org.uk)

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales and the St Christopher's College Trust.



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