

Christmas

Way of the Star

EXPLORING AN ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST
THIS CHRISTMAS



OUR INVITATION

We invite you on a journey of encounter this Christmas.

The Way of the Star is a series of twelve guided reflections and moments of prayer that explore Christmas through the scriptures.

Individuals, families or groups can follow along with the free session outlines and video resources. This dynamic resource can be shaped to any context.



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Nihil Obstat

Rev. Trenton van Reesch
Archdiocesan Censor

Imprimatur

+ Most Rev. Christopher Prowse DD STD
Archbishop of Canberra & Goulburn





A GUIDE TO ENCOUNTER

Getting Started

You may partake on this journey in any setting, structure and time frame that suits your circumstance. Though there is a natural flow between sessions, each may be used independently. This means that in group settings, newcomers can join at any time. This also alleviates pressure to complete all twelve sessions. We recommend two structures (not limited to) for groups or individuals to journey on the Way of the Star:

SESSION 1

An Encounter with the Word

SESSION 2

An Encounter with Gabriel

SESSION 3

An Encounter with the Holy Spirit

SESSION 4

An Encounter with Joy

SESSION 5

An Encounter with Bethlehem

SESSION 6

An Encounter with Innocence

SESSION 7

An Encounter with Poverty

SESSION 8

An Encounter with Fear

SESSION 9

An Encounter with Wonder

SESSION 10

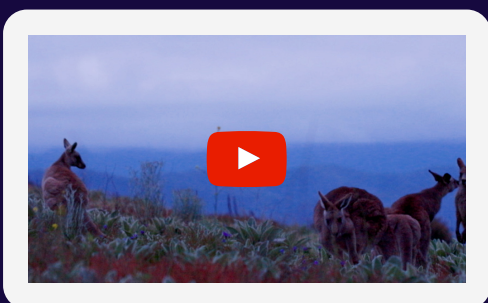
An Encounter with the Star

SESSION 11

An Encounter with Evil

SESSION 12

An Encounter with Light



**Christmas: Way of the Star
Promo Video (Scan QR Code)**

For complete, free resource access, visit:
cgyouth.org.au/christmas

GUIDE 1: Advent ('22)

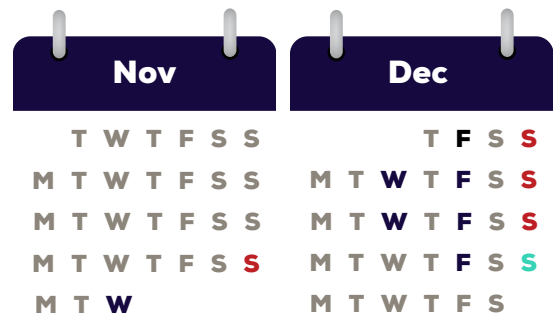
START: Sunday, Nov 27 (First Sunday of Advent)

END: Dec 25, Christmas Day (S)

Frequency: Three times per week

Groups: Meet weekly (S + S) and continue individually on the other days.

Note: The final week of Advent has two sessions.



GUIDE 2: Advent + Christmas Octave ('22)

SESSION 1 + 12: Sun, Nov 27, First Sunday of Advent

SESSION 2 + 3: Wk one of Advent

SESSION 4 + 5: Wk two of Advent

SESSION 6 + 7: Wk three of Advent

SESSION 8: Christmas Day (S)

SESSION 9: New Years Day

SESSION 10 + 11: Sun, Jan 8, Feast of the Epiphany

Groups: Meet weekly (S + S) and pray individually (W).

Note: We begin this guide with Chapter One of John's Gospel (**SESSION 1 + 12**). We explore, the *Word* (Jesus) becoming flesh and Jesus as the *light* of the world.

We end with Session 10 and 11 which are encounters that happen after the birth of Christ.



GUIDE 3: Christmas Octave + Epiphany ('22)

SESSION 7: Dec 25, Christmas Day (S)

SESSION 8: Dec 26, Feast: St. Stephen

SESSION 9: Dec 27, Feast: St. John the Apostle

SESSION 6: Dec 28, Feast: The Holy Innocents

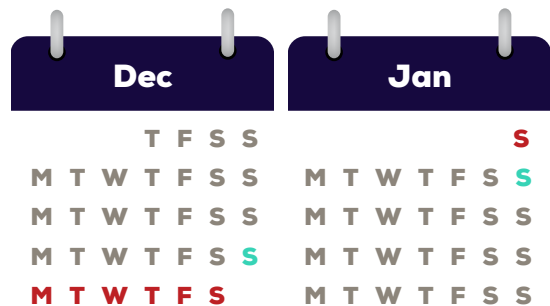
SESSION 1: Dec 29, Feast: St. Thomas Becket

SESSION 5: Dec 30, Feast: The Holy Family

SESSION 12: Dec 31, Feast: St. Sylvester I

SESSION 2: Jan 1, Mary, The Holy Mother of God

SESSION 10: Jan 8, Feast: The Epiphany (S)



SCHOOL: Staff and/or Student Prayer ('22)

START: Week 5

END: Week 10

Frequency: Twice per week for six weeks.

Note: We recommend a staff (Green) and Student (Red) sequence where staff have the opportunity pray and familiarise themselves with each session before class use.

Staff: The Sessions may be utilised for a **10 minute** staff prayer. The flow would include: Reading the scripture + reflection, watching the video, and praying the final prayer together.

Student: Staff may use the resource in the same form, or an extended form with student discussion.



Scripture

John 1:1-3, 14 (RSV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

Reflection

The 'Word' is alive.

God became man. This is the identity of Jesus the Christ! Everything that came to be, came about through Jesus. He is the Word.

This is our belief. The God of the universe, out of love, created you to live a life of love with Him. From love, for love.

God's Word speaks life and truth, but what do our words speak? We recognise God by His fruit; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22). The absence of these: use, despair, confusion, malice, wickedness, faithlessness, viciousness, revulsion.

Are the fruits of your life of God? Or do you need to make a change?

Amen.



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Contemplate + Share

Pause a few minutes with God; pray, journal.

- Q.** Did something stand out to you? Why?
- Q.** What is God saying to you right now?
- Q.** What part of your identity did you uncover?
- Q.** Do you feel compelled to make an action?

Prayer

Jesus, there are times in my life where I've been destructive with my words.
Transform me by your word.
Move my heart to love and build up others.
Help me become Christ to others.

Jesus, you became man:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, you came to make us new:

Christ have mercy

Jesus, you have called us from love for love:

Lord have mercy

Scripture

Luke 1:26-31, 38 (RSV)

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to 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, O favoured one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her."

Reflection

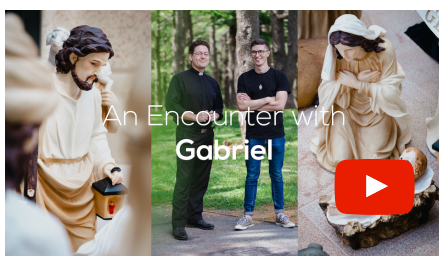
Mary said yes!

Mary stepped into the unknown. Do you think she knew what she was saying yes to? What did she think? How did she feel? What was going through her mind?

God's great invitation to Mary was to spend her whole life with Jesus. Not just the good parts or when she felt like it; all of it.

Mary embraces this intimate gift from God: a new life. She allowed herself to belong to God. Does your life belong to Jesus or just part of it?

Amen.



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Prayer

Jesus, sometimes I only choose to love you when it is easy or fashionable.

My own self can get in the way of the gift you wish to give me.

Transform me into a vessel that is willing to accept you with my whole life.

Jesus, you offer us intimacy:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, you call us to a life with you:

Christ have mercy

Jesus, you gave us Mary to be our mother:

Lord have mercy

Scripture

Luke 1: 32-37 (RSV)

He (Jesus) will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.

And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.

Reflection

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is life.

With Him, miraculous things are possible. Why? Because He is Spirit and not limited to the flesh.

The Holy Spirit draws us nearer to God the Father. The sign of Mary's barren cousin Elizabeth conceiving a child directs us to a greater truth. God gives life. The sign itself is meaningless if it doesn't point to God.

Are you open to a life in the Spirit? Or are you still waiting for a sign?

Amen.



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Prayer

Jesus, you sent the Holy Spirit so that we may dwell in your life.
Give us life afresh, full of hope and peace, lived daily with you.
Send us your Spirit today.

Jesus, you offer us new life:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, you direct us to the Father:

Christ have mercy

Jesus, you are the way, the truth and the life:

Lord have mercy

Scripture

Luke 1:39-45 (RSV)

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

Reflection

Joy overcomes adversity.

Mary's journey to visit her cousin took about ten days across a distance of approximately 130km. It was hard. She did this to celebrate the joy of God's mercy in her cousin.

Try to imagine the journey. Was she travelling on foot or maybe on a donkey? Who was with her? What was the weather like? How did she cope? We can start to imagine the heart of Mary. She was ready to love radically and available.

At the end of her journey, Mary brings Jesus to Elizabeth. Jesus is the source of joy. This is Mary's mission.

Ask yourself; do I bring a Gospel of joy and truth? Or do I bring doom and gloom and secret knowledge? Do I share in pride and gossip? Am I strong-headed without charity? Do I divide or unite? "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God (Matthew 5:9)"

Amen.



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Prayer

Jesus, you are available and merciful. You never hide your face from me.
Lord keep me focused on your joy and guide me from distractions.
Give me a heart of praise that leaps for joy at your sight.

Jesus, you are my hope:
Lord have mercy
Jesus, your justice calls repentance:
Christ have mercy
Jesus, you are the joy of the world:
Lord have mercy

Scripture

Luke 2:1-5 (RSV)

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrolment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

Reflection

Jesus sustains us for the journey.

Bethlehem is a Hebrew word that means 'House of Bread'. It is fitting that it be the place where the bread of life, Jesus, is brought into the world.

Jesus offers himself as true, life-giving food for us. He is not ordinary bread; He is extraordinary and transcendent bread. The Israelites relied upon the bread from heaven (manna) for their journey; so we now rely on Jesus to sustain us through our lives.

How prepared are we to bring Christ into our home and our hearts. With Christ in our heart, He can do extraordinary things.

Amen.



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Prayer

Come Holy Spirit and prepare my heart to receive Jesus.

Give me courage to receive love and to love others, even when it is difficult.

Help me to love with charity and joy.

Jesus, you are the bread from heaven:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, you make all things new:

Christ have mercy

Jesus, you sustain us for the journey:

Lord have mercy

Scripture

Luke 2:6 (RSV)

And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered.

Reflection

God became man.

Never, stop marvelling at the miracle; the Creator of the universe humbled himself and entered the world as a baby.

From the moment of conception, His life becomes dependant on Mary's body. He was born. He was held. He was dependant. He was innocent. He grew into a life where the cross loomed over Him. He did all of this for us.

This was God's plan that continues today. Our God who is powerful and brilliant, adopts weakness. Intimacy was always part of His plan. Mary and Joseph embraced this at His birth. This is the real Jesus, and He is all we need. For he said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). This means we too can embrace our cross, our weaknesses, hardships and persecutions. We can allow the innocence of Jesus to enter in and bring meaning and redemption in our lives.

Amen.



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Prayer

Jesus, it is unfathomable the deep love and intimacy you have shown in dwelling amongst us.

You placed yourself in our hands so that we could learn to love you and love like you.

Jesus, renew the intimacy of my faith.

Jesus, you are creator of all:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, you call us to be humble:

Christ have mercy

Jesus, in my weakness you make me strong:

Lord have mercy

Scripture

Luke 2:7 (RSV)

And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Reflection

Be uncomfortable.

How do you imagine the nativity? Often, it is depicted as warmly lit, dry and comfortable. For Joseph and Mary, it was anything but. They had been rejected. There was no reverence for this young woman with child. Little did they know, it was the same woman who carried the one they all waited for, the Messiah. They were blind to love Himself.

Jesus was born outcast, amongst the animals as they slept and fed. He was born into poverty; with nothing. Yet He Himself is everything. When everything was going wrong, Jesus brought peace. Peace is consolation in Jesus amidst the turbulence of life.

Consider your own heart. Do you recognise Christ in others? Is there space in your heart for Jesus? Or is it so with you like Bethlehem; "There was no place for them in the inn."

Amen.



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Prayer

Jesus there are many things in my life that compete for the affection of my heart. I am attached to things that prevent me from loving you. Help me to detach. Teach me to let go of the things that are not important. Help me see that you are enough.

Jesus, you embraced our poverty:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, you experienced our rejection:

Christ have mercy

Jesus, you are our peace:

Lord have mercy

Scripture

Luke 2:8-14 (RSV)

And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will 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 with whom he is pleased!"

Reflection

Do not be afraid.

When the angel appeared to the shepherds, their reaction was one of fear. Fear causes one of four reactions: fight, flight, freeze or appease.

We fear sharing Christ because we are scared of what the world might say. Maybe we don't care enough to show the world the gift that we have received. A life of fear – where we fight, take flight, freeze or appease others at the expense of Christ – is a life without loving. Love requires risk, vulnerability and availability.

We are chosen, not frozen. Take courage and ask for God's strength. Are you ready?

Amen.



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Prayer

Jesus, you call me out fear and darkness. You call me to courage and truth. In moments of fear, console me. Give me strength to be your witness to the people in my life.

Jesus, you call us out of our fear:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, you chose us to follow you:

Christ have mercy

Jesus, to you belongs all glory:

Lord have mercy

Scripture

Luke 2:15-20 (RSV)

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Reflection

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Prayer

Jesus, draw me into your presence.
Reveal your glory to me and lead me to
ponder your love.
You are good and worthy of worship and
praise.

Jesus, you call us to ponder:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, you invite us into your presence:

Christ have mercy

Jesus, you require our surrender:

Lord have mercy

Scripture

Matthew 2:7-12 (RSV)

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Reflection

We are all seeking something.

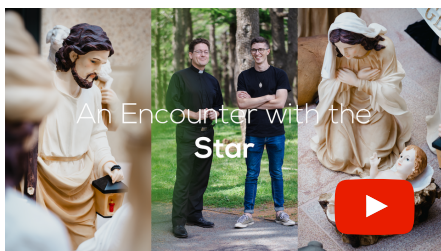
All: the hopeful, doubtful, committed, questioning.

The wise men were seeking - in the depths of their hearts - to find God. They search and follow the way of the star, which leads them to worship.

This is the Christian journey. We search for Jesus and encounter Him in our circumstances and follow Him. We are invited to allow everything in our circumstances to be transformed into a sign that points to God. This is how God sanctifies us. This leads us to worship.

Do your circumstances lead you to worship? Are you taking the narrow path, following the star? Or are you allowing yourself to be seduced by the path of the world?

Amen.



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Prayer

Jesus, so often I lose sight of you. My pride leads me to deny you and reach for temporary happiness. Lord, direct my eyes away from myself and draw them up to follow you. Do all this so that I may worship you more freely.

Jesus, you are our guide:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, you sanctify us:

Christ have mercy

Jesus, all worship and praise is yours:

Lord have mercy

Scripture

Matthew 2:13 (RSV)

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."

Reflection

All good things come from above. (James 1:17)

From goodness, comes life. From evil, comes death. Jesus is the life; He is good. Through His life we are set free from all evil.

What is evil? It is the privation or distortion of good. We must not think that evil is the equal opposite to good. Evil compared to the love that God has for you is but a drop of water cascading into a flame.

Sin is always harmful and seeks to destroy. In repentance we give up our sin and are set free by God's passionate and enduring love.

Amen.



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Prayer

Jesus, you are good. Today, I commit to reject evil and seek good in my life.
I open my life to an encounter with you.
I surrender my all to you; this is my new beginning.

Jesus, your light scatters the darkness:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, you rose from death into life:

Christ have mercy

Jesus, you are our redeemer:

Lord have mercy

Scripture

John 1:4-13 (RSV)

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.

The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Reflection

Jesus is the light.

Light gives direction, life, and above all, hope. Hope is fresh, new, life giving.

John the Baptist came to know this hope and became light to others. You can be a light to others too. Do you want to bring God's joy to the people around you? Do you want to break through the darkness and allow God to light the way?

Amen.



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Prayer

Jesus, you came to bring life so that we can have hope.

Illuminate my heart so I can be alive with you, so I can bring your hope to others too.

Jesus, you are the light of the world:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, you give hope to poor sinners:

Christ have mercy

Jesus, you are life and truth:

Lord have mercy

Christmas[☆]

Way of the Star

Christmas, Way of the Star was filmed and produced in the Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn, Australia and showcases her wonderful landscapes, facilities and people.



Miguel Oringo,
Musician.



Aaron Hilborn, Videographer
and creative film developer.

Chiara Catanzariti,
Speaker.

 **belong.**

Belong seeks to draw a new generation into the life and mission of the Catholic Church. The vision of Belong is simple, missionary renewal through Circles that gather, pray and give.

Belong seeks to support the work of the Pontifical Mission Societies and the broader Catholic Church.





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