Level: 2
Title: THE FIRST CHRISTMAS
Strand: JESUS CHRIST: Jesus of Nazareth, Saviour, Word made flesh.
Suggested Duration: 3-4 weeks

Unit Focus
In this unit the students will explore and deepen their knowledge of key people and events described in the Infancy Narratives. They will be encouraged to relate their experiences of giving, receiving and celebrating to this important liturgical event. They should understand that the bible contains many stories that tell us about Jesus’ life on earth, including the story of his birth.

Level Outcome
By the end of Level Two students should be able to:

Recognise Jesus as a human being who reveals God’s love for us.

Unit Outcomes
By the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. Recount the story of the first Christmas.
2. Know that Christmas is a time when together we thank God for the gift of God’s son Jesus.
3. Identify the members of Jesus’ human family
4. Know that Christmas is a time of giving, receiving and celebrating in our family, school and parish.

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<td>3. Mary is the mother of Jesus.</td>
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<td>2. The Gospels are part of the New Testament and tell us about Jesus’ life.</td>
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<td>Prayer:</td>
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<td>Church:</td>
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<td>2. The Church is a believing, welcoming, serving, caring and celebrating community.</td>
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Key Understandings for Students
- Each Christmas we remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus.
- We celebrate in different ways, using rituals that can involve prayer, symbols, song and silence.
- Jesus is a member of a family. His mother is Mary. Jesus is a human being like us.
- Christmas is a time for thanking God for the gift of Jesus his son.
- The Gospels tell us about Jesus’ birth and his life.
- Christmas is a time of giving and receiving in our family, school and parish.

Curriculum Links - VELS
Victorian Essential Learning Standards
The unit The First Christmas can be used to assess a range of VELS. The table below gives examples of how Level 2 standards could be assessed.
| Physical, Personal and Social Learning | Interpersonal Development | Building Social Relationships | "identify the feelings and needs of other people. Students identify and accept that there are consequences for their actions. They take appropriate steps to resolve simple conflicts."
| Working in Teams | "work in teams in assigned roles, stay on task and complete structured activities within set timeframes. They share resources fairly. With teacher support, they describe their contribution to the activities of the team."
| Inter disciplinary Learning | Information and Communications Technology | ICT for Visualising Thinking/ ICT for Creating | "students manipulate text, images and numeric data to create simple information products for specific audiences. They make simple changes to improve the appearance of their information products. With some assistance, students use ICT to locate and retrieve relevant information from a variety of sources."

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**Student Context**

As students at this level develop, they learn to separate fantasy from reality and to understand the meaning behind the symbols. They possess a vivid imagination which gives rise to lifelong religious images and concepts; incorporating images of God from loving and powerful adults, and from stories and symbols.

When children come to school they come from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. The customs and rituals that they will have experienced with regard to Christmas may vary greatly. Children at this age are very curious; they have a great imagination and will enjoy the use of story as a way of discovering details about Jesus’ birth and why we celebrate this event.

Children at this level are already aware that special events require preparation and part of the enjoyment that comes with celebrating is found in preparing for the event. In the previous Advent unit students participated in “getting ready” activities. It is important to develop the “giving” aspect of Christmas, as this will probably be a new experience for some children.

**Theological Background for Teachers**

- Advent and Christmas present opportunities for us to reflect on Jesus’ presence in our lives, to seek renewal as people of faith, and to take up the challenge of living as true followers of Jesus.

- At the school level, Christmas is a time for celebration with carols or a class liturgy. As Year One students participate in school celebrations they experience how the school community is filled with the Christmas spirit. It is also a time of reflection as the students wait to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Teachers need to relate the celebration of God’s gift of Jesus with the custom of gift giving of Christmas.

- Christmas does not simply mark the anniversary of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. We
celebrate the mystery of Christ's birth because we believe that the saving power of the historical event is present in our celebration of Christmas. The Son of God became man, was born at Bethlehem, and by his death and resurrection saved us from sin and made us children of God. The birth of Jesus, as well as his life, death and resurrection form one saving mystery, which we celebrate throughout the liturgical year.

- The actual date and day of Jesus' birth is unknown. The first mention of 25 December is in Rome in the mid-fourth century. The strongest reason for the choice of this date seems to be because it was the winter solstice, and the church wanted to replace the pagan mid-winter feast with Christian observances. In Roman times, December 25 was also the Roman feast of Sol Invictus, the unconquered sun. For the early Christians, Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, replaced the sun god and brought light into the world.

- The celebration of Christmas has an historical dimension in that it commemorates the actual birth of Jesus. However, for Christians, the feast has a profound religious significance. Christmas is a celebration of the dawn of God's light and preview of God's final self-disclosure when the kingdom will come in its fullness.

- The eschatological theme is beautifully expressed in the Opening Prayer of the Mass of Midnight: 'Lord our God ... through the night hours of the darkened earth, we your people watch for the coming of your promised Son. As we wait, give us a foretaste of the joy that you will grant us when the fullness of his glory has filled the earth'.

- The custom of exchanging Christmas gifts began in remembrance of the gold, frankincense and myrrh given to the Christ child by the wise men. In some countries, children believe that Christmas presents come from kindly St Nicholas. Early Dutch settlers in New York called St Nicholas ‘Sinter Klass’ and he became known to children as Santa Claus.

- Christians celebrate the fulfilment of God's promise to send a Saviour. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, reveals God’s great love for all people. We rejoice in the coming of Christ.

- Christmas is a time when the attention of students can be drawn to the poor and suffering in Australian society: the sick, the unemployed, refugees, immigrants, the homeless and the frail amongst the elderly. Students can contribute to various appeals during the Advent and the Christmas season that are organised annually in their own parish community.

**Scripture**

**Teacher Reference NRSV**

*Isa 9: 2, 3, 6, 7*

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness- on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder...For a child has been born for us, a son has given us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

**Student Reference CEV**

*Lk 1:26-31  An Angel Tells about the Birth of Jesus*

One month later God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee with a message for a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King David. The angel greeted Mary and said, "You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you." Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. Then the angel told Mary, "Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus.

*Lk 2:1-12, 16-18  The Birth of Jesus and the Shepherds visit.*

About that time Emperor Augustus gave orders for the names of all the people to be listed in record books. These first records were made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to go to their own hometown to be listed. So Joseph had to leave Nazareth in Galilee and go to
Bethlehem in Judea. Long ago Bethlehem had been King David's hometown, and Joseph went there because he was from David's family. Mary was engaged to Joseph and travelled with him to Bethlehem. She was soon going to have a baby, and while they were there, she gave birth to her first-born son. She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him on a bed of hay, because there was no room for them in the inn. That night in the fields near Bethlehem some shepherds were guarding their sheep. All at once an angel came down to them from the Lord, and the brightness of the Lord's glory flashed around them. The shepherds were frightened. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid! I have good news for you, which will make everyone happy. This very day in King David's hometown a Saviour was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. You will know who he is, because you will find him dressed in baby clothes and lying on a bed of hay." They hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and they saw the baby lying on a bed of hay. When the shepherds saw Jesus, they told his parents what the angel had said about him. Everyone listened and was surprised.

Mt 2:1-11 The Wise Men
When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king. During this time some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and said, "Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." When King Herod heard about this, he was worried, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. Herod brought together the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?" They told him, "He will be born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet wrote, 'Bethlehem in the land of Judea, you are very important among the towns of Judea. From your town will come a leader, who will be like a shepherd for my people Israel.' "Herod secretly called in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star. He told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, let me know. I want to go and worship him too." The wise men listened to what the king said and then left. And the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They were thrilled and excited to see the star. When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshiped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him.

Suggested Assessment Tasks

Assessment tasks for this unit may include:

Outcome 1 Recount the story of the first Christmas.
- After listening to Luke’s account of the First Christmas, children write a recount of the story, or complete a story map.
- After listening to Matthew’s account of the First Christmas, children sequence pictures and/or text about the key events.

Outcome 2 Know that Christmas is a time when together we thank God for the gift of God’s son Jesus.
- Write a prayer of thanks to God, for the gift of his Son, Jesus.

Outcome 3 Identify the members of Jesus’ human family
- Students create a family portrait of Jesus’ human family

Outcome 4 Know that Christmas is a time of giving, receiving, celebrating in our family, school and parish.
- Complete the sentence "Christmas is a time of giving because………"

N.B Outcomes 1, 3 and 4 lend themselves to reporting in the dimension of Knowledge and Understanding.

Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

Focusing Activity

Play ‘Pass the Parcel’, each layer containing a question about Christmas or The Christmas Story

- Setting up of a Christmas /giving tree and the class Advent Wreath
- Watch a video about the first Christmas.
- Read “The Nativity” (Vivas, Julie). Note the scriptural relevance of all literature resources.
- Make a word bank of Christmas words and feelings.
- Encourage the children to talk about and bring to school the special things they have at home that come out at Christmas. Lead them to remember and talk about Christmas celebrations of the previous year.
- Think/pair/share. *(refer to icon in Planning Tool)* What do we do at home and at school to celebrate Jesus’ birthday?
- Identify broad categories such as special food, gifts and cards, visiting and visitors, special songs and music, special family, school and religious customs. Students place their family activities under the designated category.
- Visually represent Mt.2:1-11, ‘The Birth of Jesus’, through sketching and painting, for use in a prayer celebration.
- Make a large poster or sign ‘Year One/Two is celebrating Jesus’ birthday’.
- Make Christmas decorations representing the people who visited Jesus, to hang on the class Christmas tree.
- Prepare a simple prayer to include in celebrations for Jesus’ birthday.
- Participate in a prayer service which includes prayer written from assessment strategy for outcome 2
- Create class murals representing the visit of the shepherds and/or the wise men.
- Y chart *(refer to icon in Planning Tool)* imagining the experience of the shepherds and/or wise men.
- Learn carols about the birth of Jesus.
- Work with a partner to create a diorama of the nativity scene.
- Complete a Sequencing activity *(refer to icon in Planning Tool)* recounting the infancy narratives from Matthew or Luke.
- Make a collage illustrating a family preparing for Christmas
- Write an invitation to family members inviting them to their family Christmas celebration
- Role play in groups parts of the story of The First Christmas, eg the Annunciation, the trip to Bethlehem, the birth in the stable, the visit from the angel to the shepherds, the Wise Men visiting baby Jesus.
- Make a wish list of non-material things that people may want for Christmas, eg, peace, friendship, happiness, a sick friend to recover, etc. write onto a Christmas shape and use for a display
- Introduce the problem… you have no money what could you give for a gift. Working in groups, Children make a ‘ten gifts of love’ scroll. Write out ten special gifts they can give to others this Christmas season but don’t have to buy. These can include hugs, smiles, kisses, songs, help, etc. Scroll and tie with a nice ribbon.
- Invite students from other classes to come and speak about their class celebrations, or in small groups visit other classrooms to find out.
- Invite parents to come and speak about Christmas celebrations in various countries.
- Invite grandparents to participate in preparations for Jesus’ birthday. Activities could include making invitations, cards, assembling small posies, cooking and making decorations.
- Each child contributes to a class giving box to give to an appropriate charity.
- Lk 2:1-12, 16-18 To PREPARE TO HEAR the Word - locate on a map place names mentioned in the text; Bethlehem, Judea, Nazareth and estimate how far Mary and Joseph had to travel. Share what they know about shepherds and farming today and compare this to the time of Jesus.
- Lk 2:1-12, 16-18 To ENCOUNTER the Word, after reading the text, students role play the story
- Lk 2:1-12, 16-18 To ENCOUNTER the Word, after reading the text, give students the characters in three pairs
Joseph and King David, Mary and Jesus, Angels and Shepherds. Identify the connection between the characters in each pair.

- Lk 2:1-12, 16-18 To RESPOND to the Word – Tell the Christmas story using the Hot Seat strategy (refer to icon in Planning Tool)

## Resources

For resources to support this unit, refer to the online planning tool. For additional resources, refer to the Resource Centre Catalogue: [http://www.ceoballarat.catholic.edu.au](http://www.ceoballarat.catholic.edu.au) and follow links to Resource Centre.