

# God Fulfills His Promise

19

## WE GATHER

### Christ, Be Our Light

Refrain:

Christ, be our light!  
Shine in our hearts.  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ, be our light!  
Shine in your church gathered today.

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.  
Longing for truth, we turn to you.  
Make us your own, your holy people,  
light for the world to see. (Refrain)

**Reader:** The words of Isaiah the prophet  
are repeated as Saint Mark writes about  
the mission of John the Baptist.

A reading from the holy Gospel according  
to Mark

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

**Reader:** "Behold, I am sending my messenger  
ahead of you;

he will prepare your way.

A voice of one crying out in the desert:

'Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight his paths.'"

(Mark 1:2-3)


The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Refrain:

Christ, be our light!  
Shine in our hearts.  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ, be our light!  
Shine in your church gathered today.

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.  
Longing for hope, many despair.  
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.  
Make us your living voice. (Refrain)

 What is one important thing that  
has happened to you? Why is  
it important?







A painting from the *Annunciation Series*, by Maria Pia Marrella, 1995.

## WE BELIEVE

### Mary is blessed by God.

During the last year or two of King Herod's reign over Judea, the most important event in the history of salvation took place. In the town of Nazareth in Galilee, an angel of God gave a message to a young girl named Mary. Mary was engaged to Joseph, a descendant of King David.

The angel said to Mary, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28). The angel continued, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:30-33).

Mary did not understand how all of this would happen to her. She was not even married yet. But the angel explained, "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" (Luke 1:35).

Take a moment to imagine how Mary must have felt.

The angel also told Mary that her relative Elizabeth, who was very old, would conceive a child. The angel said that nothing was impossible with God.

Mary spoke to the angel saying, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). Mary's words showed her complete faith in God and her choice to accept and follow God's plan.



The fulfillment of all that God had promised through the prophets had now begun. The long-awaited Messiah, the Savior of all people, would soon come into the world. The child that Mary had conceived was the Son of God. Through Mary, God the Son, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, would become one of us.

Joseph was unaware that this was all part of God's plan. So Joseph was going to leave Mary quietly. Then an angel of the Lord came to Joseph in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:20-21).

Like Mary, Joseph did what the Lord asked of him.

Take a moment to imagine how Joseph must have felt.

## As Catholics...

Throughout her life Mary loved and obeyed God. She trusted God completely. Mary loved and cared for Jesus and along with Joseph, Mary taught Jesus to be faithful to the covenant and to follow Jewish laws and customs. Mary stood by Jesus as he died on the cross. Her faith in her son did not weaken in times of suffering or loss. Along with Jesus' followers Mary waited in prayer and with hope for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Mary was the first disciple of Jesus, and she is our greatest saint. She is a model for all of us.

What are some ways you can show that you are Jesus' disciple?



Imagine that you have been asked to announce the coming of God's Son. Design a television news alert, a press release, or an Internet banner advertisement to share the Good News. Share your design with a partner; then discuss how you think people would react to the news.



**Mary and Elizabeth had special roles in God's plan.**

Throughout the history of the Jewish People, God had called many women to help his people to grow strong and faithful. God called Mary and Elizabeth to take roles in his plan of salvation.

After the angel's visit to her, Mary traveled to see her relatives Elizabeth and Zechariah. Zechariah had been visited by an angel, too. The angel told Zechariah that his wife, Elizabeth, would have a child and the child should be named John. Because Zechariah did not believe that this could happen, he lost his ability to speak. The angel told him that he would not speak again until his son was born.

When Mary arrived and greeted Elizabeth, the child that Elizabeth was carrying moved within her. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled" (Luke 1:42-45).



*The Visitation, Franco-Flemish school, 15th century*







## God the Son became man.

Mary and Joseph began their life together in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. They prepared for the birth of the child and for the life that they would share with him. God had spoken to each of them. However, the event that was about to take place was beyond Mary and Joseph's understanding. The child who was about to be born of Mary was the Son of God. This child, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, would save all people.

At this time in Judea, a census, or count of the people, was being taken. Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem of Judea, the city of King David's birth. All men had to enroll their families in the city of their ancestors, and Joseph was a descendant of David. Mary, too, was of the house of David. It was in Bethlehem that Mary gave birth to her son. Thus, the words of the prophet Micah were fulfilled. Bethlehem is the birthplace of the "one who is to be ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:1).

Following the instructions of the angel in Joseph's dream, Mary and Joseph named the child Jesus. This name means "God saves." God the Son became one of us.

"And the Word became flesh  
and made his dwelling among us."

(John 1:14)

This mystery is called the Incarnation. The **Incarnation** is the truth that the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, became man.

Mary and Joseph followed the laws of their Jewish faith, and so they traveled to Jerusalem to present Jesus in the Temple. There they met a holy man named Simeon to whom the Holy Spirit revealed that he would not die before he saw the Messiah. Mary and Joseph also met a prophetess named Ana. They both recognized the child Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promise to save his people.

In Nazareth, Jesus grew up with Mary and Joseph and many relatives and friends. Jesus heard about his Jewish ancestors and celebrated the Jewish feasts. On certain feasts his family traveled to the Temple in Jerusalem.



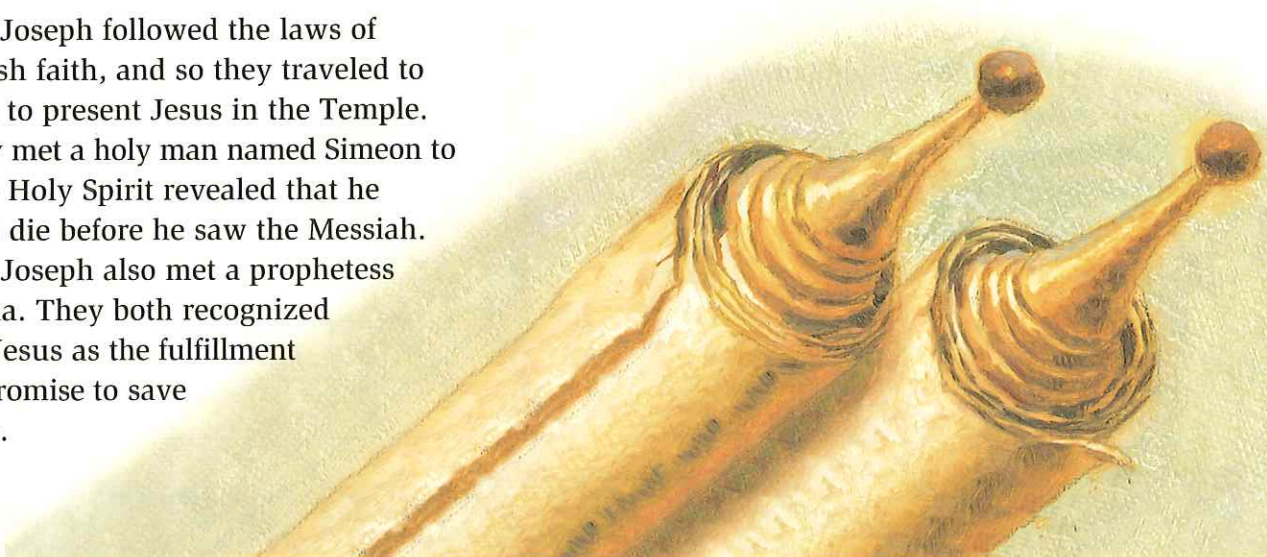
Luke 2:41-52

Each year Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Passover. When Jesus was twelve years old, he went with them. When the time came to return to Nazareth, Jesus remained in Jerusalem. But Mary and Joseph did not know this. They thought he was traveling with their relatives. When they could not find him, they went back to Jerusalem.

They found him three days later, listening and questioning the teachers. Mary and Joseph were astounded. Jesus told them that they should have known that he was in his Father's house. "But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and man"

(Luke 2:50-52).

This is one of the few accounts of Jesus' early years. We learn from it that Jesus was a faithful, obedient Jewish child. We also see that he had deep understanding and knowledge of God.







**Incarnation** (p. 330)



Role-play the story of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus during their visit to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover as found in Luke 2:41–52. Characters will include: a narrator, Mary, Joseph, Jesus (12 years old), friends and relatives, and teachers in the Temple. Write your own script and present your play.



## John prepared the way for Jesus.

From the Gospels we do not learn much about Jesus' life until he was about thirty years old. During these "hidden" years, as they are called, things changed in Judea.

When Herod the Great, king of Judea, died, his relatives could not agree on his successor. So Caesar Augustus in Rome used this opportunity to weaken Judea by dividing Herod's territories among his sons Archelaus, Philip, and Herod Antipas.

Archelaus was a terrible leader, so Augustus removed him. To rule this part of Herod's old kingdom, Caesar Augustus set up a procurator, a kind of deputy governor. Rome was slowly taking over complete control of Judea, which the Romans called Palestine.

Judea was a divided country. Some regions were ruled directly by Rome, and others were governed by Jewish princes who were reporting to the Romans. Therefore, relations between Rome and the Jews were very strained.

Religious tensions were also a problem. The Jews feared that the Romans would interfere with their worship and observance of the covenant with God. Religious divisions and social injustices were widespread. It was in these troubled times that "... the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert" (Luke 3:2).

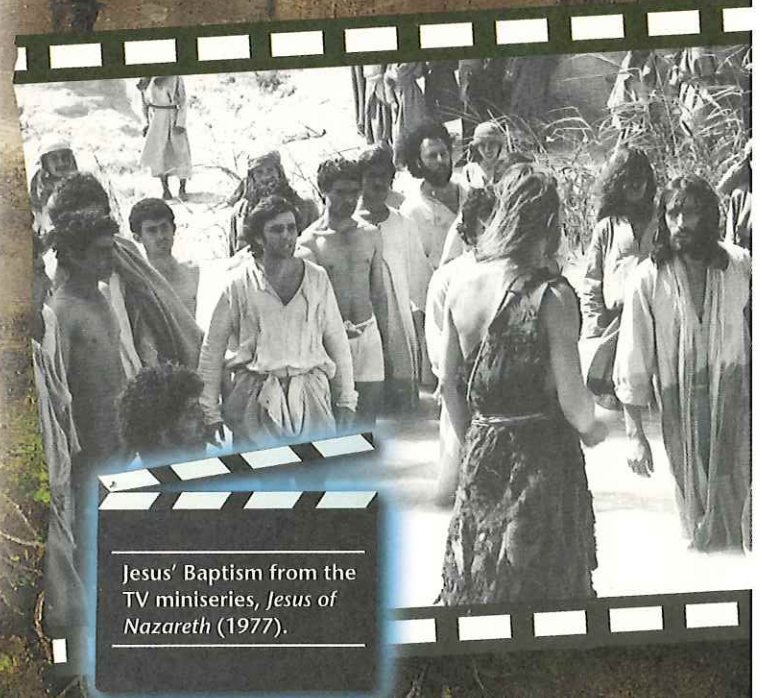
John began to prophesy and to urge people to repent and to ask God for forgiveness. He encouraged them to get ready for the coming of the Messiah, the Anointed One, the one foretold by the prophets.

Since people came to be baptized by him in the Jordan River, he was known as John the Baptist. This baptism by John showed people's willingness to change their lives.

John told the people, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. . . . He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire" (Luke 3:16).

It was about this time that Jesus left Nazareth and went to the Jordan River to hear John preach and to be baptized by him. "After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'" (Luke 3:21-22)

Like John, we can prepare the way for people to welcome Jesus, too. By Baptism, each of us is called to live as one of Jesus' disciples. When we do what is right and treat others fairly and with justice, we are showing what it is to be a follower of Jesus.





## WE RESPOND



Can you prepare the way for Jesus today? What will you say? What will you do? Write some ways here. Role-play one of them.

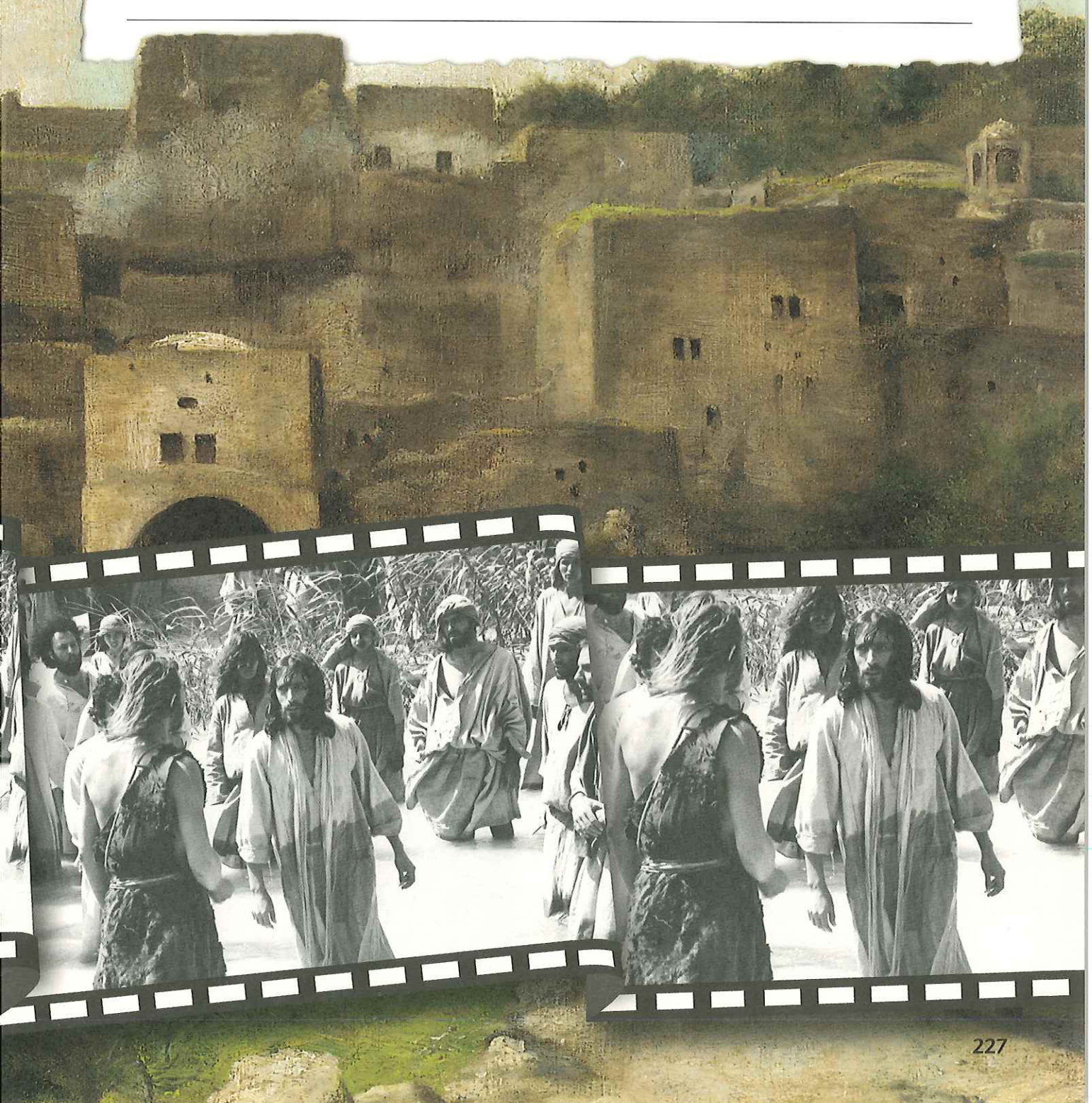
---

---

---

---

---







# PROJECT

## Show What *you* Know

Who am I? Write the letter that best describes the biblical character.

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| a. Anna      | 1. _____ I preached and encouraged the people to repent and to ask God for forgiveness.                                       |
| b. Elizabeth | 2. _____ I lost my ability to speak when I did not believe the angel's announcement that I would have a son.                  |
| c. John      | 3. _____ I am a holy man. The Holy Spirit revealed to me that I would not see death until I had seen the Messiah of the Lord. |
| d. Simeon    | 4. _____ I saw the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, and I spoke of him as the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation.  |
| e. Zechariah | 5. _____ I expressed joy when I recognized the presence of the God in an unborn child.  |

## What's *the* Word?

*"The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.'" (Luke 2:10-12)*

- Circle another name for Bethlehem in the passage.
  - Why do you think the birth of Jesus involves so many visits from angels (to Mary, Joseph, Zechariah), and, in this passage, the shepherds?
- 



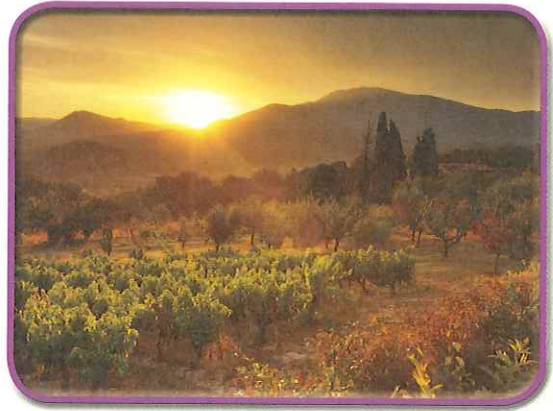
The accounts of Jesus' birth and childhood are called the *infancy narratives*. The infancy narratives are found in the first two chapters of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.





## More to Explore

The Liturgy of the Hours, part of the public prayer of the Church, helps us to praise God throughout the entire day. It is made up of psalms, readings from Scripture and Church teachings, hymns, and prayers. It is celebrated at various times during the day and night. At Morning Prayer, the Canticle of Zechariah is always prayed. In this canticle, Jesus is referred to as “the daybreak from on high.” At Evening Prayer, the Canticle of Mary is always prayed. In this prayer we, along with Mary, praise God for all he has done for us. The Liturgy of the Hours reminds us that God is always active and present in our lives.



### DISCIPLE CHALLENGE

- Underline the phrase that tells the purpose of the Liturgy of the Hours.
- Circle the phrase that describes Jesus in the Canticle of Zechariah.
- Find out more about the Liturgy of the Hours.



In 2005, Pope Benedict XVI presented the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. He urged Catholics to learn the common prayers of the Church in Latin. Visit the *Latin Hall* on [www.weliveourfaith.com](http://www.weliveourfaith.com) to learn and listen to prayers of the Church in Latin.

## Celebrate!

Every Sunday at Mass during the Profession of Faith, we profess our belief in the Incarnation—the truth that the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became man. This week at Mass, listen closely as the words of the Creed are professed.

## Take Home

When we do what is right and treat others fairly, we are showing what it is to be a follower of Jesus. Talk about our call to live as disciples, and ask your family members to share ideas for living out this call.



# CHAPTER TEST

Circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ told Mary that her relative Elizabeth was with child.  
a. Anna                                      b. An angel                                      c. Zechariah
2. \_\_\_\_\_ prepared the people for the Messiah.  
a. Elijah                                      b. Zechariah                                      c. John
3. Zechariah lost his ability to speak because he was \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. old                                      b. sick                                      c. unbelieving
4. \_\_\_\_\_ was a descendant of King David.  
a. Joseph                                      b. Simeon                                      c. Zechariah

## Short Answers

5. What role did angels play in the coming of the Messiah?

---

6. Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem?

---

7. What is the Incarnation?

---

8. Why is the story of the finding of Jesus in the Temple important?

---

Write a paragraph to answer this question.

- 9–10. How was Mary blessed by God?

---

---

---

---