

THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTMAS

Liturgical Action. Based on the Infancy Narratives in both Luke and Matthew's Gospels

*These are some famous frescos from the Arena Chapel in Padua, Italy. They were painted in the early 1300's by the artist **Giotto di Bondone** (c. 1267–January 8, 1337), better known simply as Giotto. He was an Italian painter and architect from Florence. They tell the Christmas story.*

If you look at each painting carefully you will see wonderful details and the colours he used, notice the differences eg Mary and the Angels in orange, Joseph asleep in the Nativity and baby Jesus has the face of an adult.

You will need:

- Copies of Giotto's Frescos, laminated. (Available on this webpage)
- Cut outs of the following cards
- A strip of white felt as underlay.

The underlay is a white, felt, "scroll" that unrolls to fit seven laminated illustrations. The underlay unrolls toward the storyteller and the story 'grows' out of the rolled up underlay. Place the cards beside the frescos as you examine each one.

When children are seated in a semi-circle ready to listen to the story, place the gold box/bag, containing the materials you will need, carefully beside you.

The Annunciation

The Annunciation took place when the Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that God had chosen her to be the mother of God.

Mary was scared, but happy.

She was stunned but blessed.

She said "yes."

The Visitation

Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth who was also going to have a baby even though she was quite old. Elizabeth was much older than Mary. Mary stayed with her for three months.

The Nativity

Mary's baby was born in Bethlehem.
Mary is awake but happy, Joseph is asleep.
The Nativity means 'the birth'.
The angels are all over the place singing,
"Glory to God in the highest."

Adoration of the Magi

In Matthew's Gospel we read that the three Kings, the Magi, the Wise men, finally arrived after following a star to Bethlehem.

They came to adore the baby Jesus, they brought three gifts for him. That is why we think that there were probably three kings, but Matthew does not give us a number. Have a close look at the camels in the painting. Do you think that Giotto had seen a camel before painting them?

The Presentation in the Temple

After a time Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem. It was the custom to present a new baby, to celebrate his name and to dedicate the baby to God.

We celebrate this event on the third Sunday after Christmas Day. The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, also marks the end of the Christmas Liturgical Season.

The Flight into Egypt

An Angel came to Joseph in a dream before the soldiers arrived. The angel told Joseph to take Mary and Jesus to another country. They fled far away to the land of Egypt. Mary and Joseph rode on a donkey, Joseph led the way.

Teachers of Junior grades check the next fresco before showing to students.

The Massacre of the Innocents

This is the sad part of the story. The Three Kings had asked Herod where to find the 'king'. But they did not tell him where they had found Jesus. Herod was angry and sent his soldiers to Bethlehem to kill every baby boy who was under the age of two.

You can see how sad everyone is in the picture, even Herod.