

**Thursday
Bethlehem**

Reflect : I found it deeply moving to stand in Manger Square in Bethlehem a few months ago. The Church of the Nativity is the oldest complete church in the Christian world. The town where the Prince of Peace was born has been a place of confrontation between Palestinians and Israelis.

Pray : peace between the Israeli and the Palestinian people.

Read : Micah 5 : 2 and John 8 : 40 -43

Friday

Mother and child – Mary and Jesus

Reflect : Mary brought the child, Jesus, to birth and gently wrapped him in her love. Jesus brought life to the world when he leapt from the tomb and showed us the face of perfect love. Birth and death, each is a journey and a passage of life for all of us. In both of them we are never far from God.

Pray : for all those who remember loved ones who have died and for whom Christmas is hard.

Read : John 14 : 1 – 7

Saturday

Kings and gifts

Reflect : What can I give Him, poor as I am

If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb

If I were a wise man I would do my part

Yet what can I give Him, give my heart.

Pray : for our preparation during Advent for the worship at Christmas.
for lives that reflect this worship throughout the year.

Read : Matthew 2 : 9 – 12.

Further reflection : All of the characters of the nativity narrative remind us of love, of wonder, of worship, of wondering , of hearing heavenly music and responding, of boldly living what the Incarnation means. How will you live this out this Advent, Christmas and Epiphany season?



MU PRAYER LEAFLET – ADVENT 2011

Dear friends,

The Christmas story is a very big story whose light streams over the whole world. It is a story that changes the course of world history. It is getting close to the time when we unpack the Christmas decorations from their boxes and bring out our nativity sets. Our children always loved to add a few extras to the set – angels they had made at pre-school, an extra animal or two, even some extra stars. It was St Francis of Assisi who first presented the mystery of Christ's incarnation in this very real way and that first "crib" was peopled by real human beings and animals. The stable with its animals, the angels, the star, Mary, Joseph, Jesus, the shepherds and the wise men brings very close not only the story from long ago but its immediate and urgent meaning to us all right now. As you unpack your set this year pause and contemplate each of those figures and how they speak to you and how they speak to the whole world in Advent and Christmas 2011. My hope is that this leaflet will enrich your reflections. Peace and blessing this Christmas,

Bronwyn



Prayer of the week

O God, your light leads us steadfastly towards all truth. Help us never to depart from your way but always follow where love leads until we come to bow before you the child of Bethlehem, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

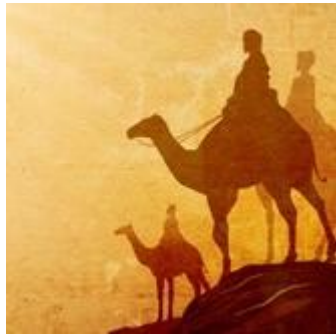
Sunday

Star and stable

Reflect : The light of the star in the sky was dazzling. It highlighted the darkness of the cave where Jesus was born. The world is full of situations of light and of darkness. We know this in our own lives.

Pray : for strength in times of darkness and grace to be the light-bearers in our own relationships.

Read : Isaiah 9 : 2, 5 - 6.



Monday

The messengers and the message

Reflect : Angels are very mysterious to us and their appearances in the Biblical story are frequently frightening, scaring people out of their wits! They are generally busiest when there are momentous things happening. Their job for God is to communicate the message of how passionately He cares about human beings.

Pray : that we are open to the good news and courageously live it in our own lives.

Read: Luke 2 : 8 – 14

Tuesday

Shepherds and sheep

Reflect : Ordinary shepherds whose names we do not even know are remembered two thousand years later as the first to recognise Jesus as God's gift to a waiting world. They were not noble or pious but were ordinary workers with a low reputation. Jesus is the shepherd who comes to seek the lost sheep. I love to think of the earthiness brought by the presence of sheep and other animals in the stable– the coming of Jesus to all of the created order. The general messiness of the scene brings home what life is like all the time – messy!

Pray : for those who struggle to make ends meet ; for those in our own community who are not highly esteemed.

Read : Luke 2 : 15 - 18



Wednesday

Two mothers, two sons

Reflect : As you look at your Mary figure in the crib set think what has led up to this moment in her story - the announcing message of the angel Gabriel, the long walk to visit Elizabeth. In the cool air of the higher country their two sons, Jesus and John, “met” for the first time. The two women cared for each other for three months

Pray : women who are pregnant and those who long for pregnancy. Those who care for them.

Read : Luke 1 : 39 – 44.