

Nativity Pageant

This play, in word, song and tableau, tells the Christmas Story from the Annunciation through the Flight into Egypt. The text is extracted from the Gospels of St. Luke and St. Matthew. Interspersed are 7 carols, the Magnificat, Ave Maria and Nunc Dimittis. The carols are designed to be sung by the children, adult choir and congregation.

Carols were selected not only on the basis of their texts, but also due to their suitability for the treble voice. Because a priest reads the narrator's part, the children don't need to memorize lines; they only need to remain in their character for the time they're on stage.

Costumes for the play can be quite simple. The shepherds, Joseph and Mary can wear long pieces of rough cloth draped around them and closed at the waist with cord belts. Simple headdresses can also be made of pieces of cloth. Angel and sheep costumes are readily available in childrens stores.



Cast: Angel Gabriel
 Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist
 Simeon
 angel choir
 Joseph's dream angel
 shepherds, with optional sheep dog
 sheep
 three kings
 Herod the King
 Joseph
 Mary
 baby Jesus
 Narrator

Music: Gabriel's Message (children, adult choir & congregation)
 J.S. Bach's Ave Maria (soprano soloist)
 Healey Willan's Magnificat (adult choir)
 Once in Royal David's City (children, adult choir & congregation)
 While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks (children, adult choir & congregation)
 Good Christian Men Rejoice (children, adult choir & congregation)
 Healey Willan's Nunc Dimittis (adult choir)
 We Three Kings of Orient Are (children, adult choir & congregation)
 Lully, Lullay (children, adult choir & congregation)
 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming (children, adult choir & congregation)

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The Story

(from Luke, Chapter 1)

Narrator: 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.



Children: The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame,
'All hail,' said he, 'thou lowly maiden Mary,'
Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

Choir Men: 'For known a blessed mother thou shalt be,
All generations laud and honor thee,
Thy son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold,'
Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

Choir Women: Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,
'To me be as it pleaseth God,' she said,
'My soul shall laud and magnify his holy name.'
Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

Congregation: Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say:
Most highly favored lady, Gloria!



Narrator: 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 her kinswoman Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leapt in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry:



Soloist: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee

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Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.



Narrator: And Mary said to Elizabeth:



Adult Choir: My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God, my
Savior
For he has regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden
For behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed;
For He who is mighty has done great things and holy is His name
And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation
He has shown strength with his arm
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts
He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted those of low
degree
He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent
empty away
He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our forefathers,
to Abraham and to his posterity forever.



(from Luke Chapter 2)

Narrator: In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, 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. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.



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Children: Once in royal David's city, stood a lowly cattle shed
Where a mother laid her baby, in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that Mother mild, Jesus Christ, her little child.

Choir Women: He came down to earth from heaven Who is God and Lord of all,
And his shelter was a stable, and his cradle was a stall.
With the poor and mean and lowly, Lived on earth, our savior holy.

Congregation: And our eyes at last shall see him, Through his own redeeming love
For that child so dear and gentle Is our Lord in heaven above
And he leads his children on to the place where he has gone.



Narrator: 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 shown around them, and they were
filled with fear.



Choir Women: While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground, The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

Choir Men: "Fear not," said he, for mighty dread had seized their troubled mind;
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring to you and all mankind.
To you, in David's town, this day is born of David's line
The Saviour, who is Christ the Lord; and this shall be the sign:
The heavenly Babe you there shall find to Human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands and in a manger laid."

Congregation: Thus spake the seraph, and forthwith appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God, who thus addressed their joyful song:

Children: "All glory be to God on high and on the earth be peace;
Good will henceforth from heaven to men Begin and never cease."



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Narrator: When the angels went away from them into heaven the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over into 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 to them.



Children: Good Christian friends, rejoice, with heart and soul and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;
Ox and ass before him bow and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today, Christ is born today.

Adult Choir: Good Christian friends, rejoice, with heart and soul and voice;
Now ye hear of endless bliss; Jesus Christ was born for this.
He hath oped the heavenly door and man is blessed evermore
Christ was born for this, Christ was born for this.

Congregation: Good Christian friends, rejoice, with heart and soul and voice;
Now ye need not fear the grave: Jesus Christ was born to save
Calls you one and calls you all to gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save, Christ was born to save.



Narrator: And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given to him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the time came for their purification, according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord, and to offer a sacrifice, according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Now there a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And inspired by the spirit he came into the

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temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said:



Adult Choir: Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,
According to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation
Which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples,
A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel.



Narrator: And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher; she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.



(from Matthew Chapter 2)

Narrator: Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the King, behold wise men from the East came to Jerusalem. When Herod the King heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him, and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, in Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet: ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern the people Israel.’ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying: “Go search diligently for the child and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”

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Children: We, three Kings of Orient, are, bearing gifts we traverse afar.
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.

Congregation: O, star of wonder, star of night, star of royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

Choir Men: Born a king on Bethlehem's plain, Gold I bring to crown him again.
King forever, ceasing never, Over us all to reign.

Congregation: O, star of wonder, star of night, star of royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

Choir Men: Frankincense to offer have I, Incense holds a deity nigh,
Prayer and praising, all men raising, worship him God oh high.

Congregation: O, star of wonder, star of night, star of royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

Choir Men: Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

Congregation: O, star of wonder, star of night, star of royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

Choir Women: Glorious now behold him arise, King and God and sacrifice
Heaven sings Alleluia, Alleluia the earth replies.

Congregation: O, star of wonder, star of night, star of royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.



Narrator: But the wise men, being warned in a dream not to return to Herod,
departed to their own country by another way. 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." And he rose and took the child and his
mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the
death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the
prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." The Herod, when he saw

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that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under.



Children: Lullay, thou little tiny child, by by lully, lullay.
Lullay, thou little tiny child, by by lully, lullay.

Choir Women: Oh, sisters, too, what may we do, for to preserve this day?
This poor youngling, of whom we do sing, by by lully, lullay.

Children: Lullay, thou little tiny child, by by lully, lullay.
Lullay, thou little tiny child, by by lully, lullay.

Choir Men: Herod, the King, in his raging, charged he hath this day
His men of might, in his own sight, all children young to slay.

Children: Lullay, thou little tiny child, by by lully, lullay.
Lullay, thou little tiny child, by by lully, lullay.



Narrator: But when Herod died, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he learned that Archelaus reigned over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled.



Children: Lo, how a rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung
Of Jesse's lineage coming, as men of old have sung
It came, a blossom bright, amidst the cold of winter
When half-spent was the night.

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Adult Choir: This rose-tree blossom laden whereof Isaiah spoke,
Is Mary, spotless maiden, who mothered for our sake
This little child new-born, by God's eternal counsel
On that first Christmas morn.

Congregation: O flower, whose fragrance tender, with sweetness fills the air
Dispel in glorious splendor the darkness everywhere
True man, yet very God, from sin and death now save us
And share our every load.

