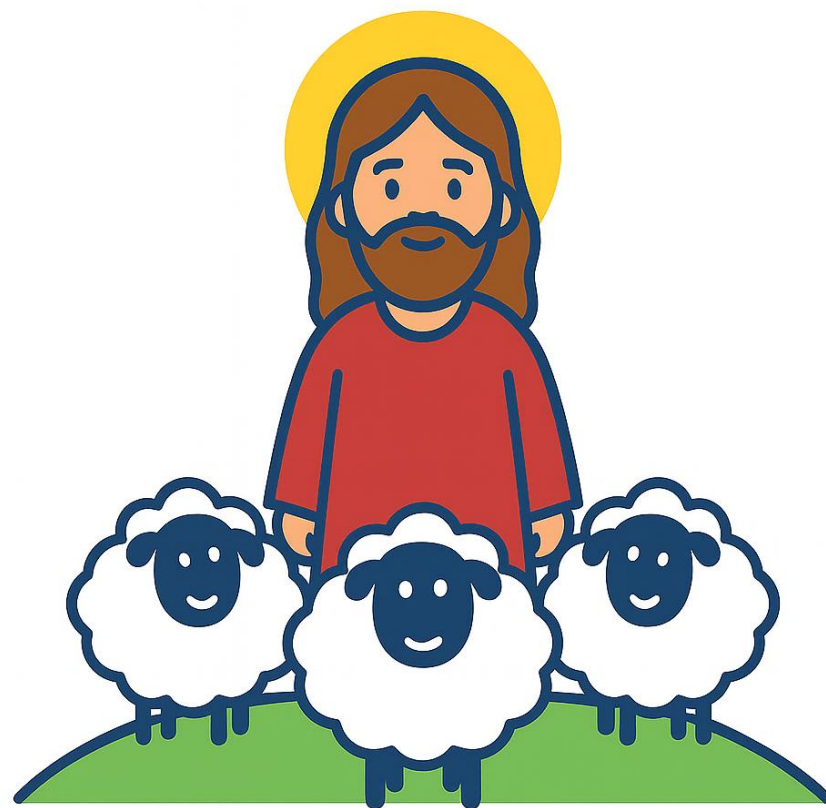




DISCERNING DISCIPLES

A religious education programme
for Catholic primary schools in
the Archdiocese of Birmingham



Prophecy and Promise

Nursery

Week 1

Hear



Know

Mary was going to have a baby. His name will be Jesus (Luke 1:26-31, 38).

Mary is told by an angel she is going to have a baby.

Mary is told to name the baby Jesus.



Discern

Mary is so special God sent the angel Gabriel to her.

Suggested discovery questions

1. I wonder how Mary felt when the Angel Gabriel spoke to her?
2. Why do you think God chose Mary for this very special job?



Respond

Explore and decorate their own name, recognising it is special as it was chosen for them (e.g. using pictures that represent their interests.)

Textual references

An age-appropriate re-telling of The Annunciation, based on Luke 1:26-31, 38

Key vocabulary

angel	God's special messenger
Annunciation	the moment the angel tells Mary she will have a baby called Jesus
Mary	the mother of Jesus, chosen by God

Teacher Notes

This week introduces pupils to the Annunciation, the moment when God chooses Mary to become the mother of Jesus. Catholic theology teaches that God's invitation to Mary reveals two important truths: God acts in human history, and God invites people to share in His plan. The angel's message shows that Jesus' birth is not accidental but part of God's loving purpose for the world. Mary's response, traditionally called her 'yes' to God, is an act of trust. For very young pupils, the focus is that God chooses Mary because she is special and loves God. Emphasise Mary's calmness, courage and closeness to God rather than the complexity of the event itself.

Children at this age learn through relationships and familiar experiences. Connecting Mary hearing her name called by the angel with their own sense of being known and loved helps them begin to understand that God chooses people personally and with care.



Prophecy and Promise

Nursery

Week 2
Hear & Believe



Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4-7). Mary had a baby called Jesus.

Know

Mary has a baby called Jesus.

Jesus is born in a stable in Bethlehem because there is no room at the inn for Mary and her husband Joseph.

Bethlehem is a long way from their home in Nazareth.



Discern

Jesus is so special, it doesn't matter where he was born; God chose a stable.

Suggested discovery questions

1. Do you think Jesus was still very special, even though he was born in a stable with animals?
2. Why do you think God wanted Jesus to be born in such a simple place?
3. If you saw a baby born in a stable, what would you think or feel?



Respond

See a representation of the stable and retell the elements of the direct knowledge statements in various ways.

Sing and explore the words to 'Away in a Manger'.

Textual references

An age-appropriate re-telling of Jesus' birth, based on Luke 2: 4-7

Key vocabulary

Bethlehem	the town where Jesus is born
inn	a resting place for travellers to stay at
Nazareth	the town where Mary and Joseph live

Teacher Notes

Jesus' birth in Bethlehem shows God's nearness within ordinary life. Catholic teaching presents the event as the start of Jesus' earthly dwelling, where simple shelter becomes a place of welcome. Bethlehem's name, often understood as 'house of bread', invites reflection on God's generous provision. The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem situates faith in real places and family routines, helping pupils recognise that God's work touches everyday geography.

A manger demonstrates practical care, since the family ensures the baby has a safe resting place. Emphasise place, movement, and kindness rather than grandeur, noticing how people make room and offer protection for a newborn.

Avoid theological repetition by emphasising place and prophecy rather than Mary's calling or the Incarnation, which appear in other weeks.



Prophecy and Promise

Nursery

Week 3

Celebrate & Live



Celebrate Advent, it is a time to get ready for Christmas. Advent wreath.

Know

Advent is a special time when we get ready for Jesus at Christmas

An Advent wreath helps us count the weeks until Christmas.

Christmas is the Church's celebration of Jesus' birthday.



Discern

An Advent wreath uses special colours to help us wait for Jesus to be born.

Suggested discovery questions

1. Purple is the special colour for Advent. What can you do that is special when you are getting ready for Christmas?
2. The pink candle shows joy. What makes you feel happy when you are waiting for Christmas?
3. The white candle means Jesus is born. How do you think people feel when Jesus comes at Christmas?



Respond

Create an Advent wreath.

Use an Advent wreath to count down the weeks of Advent.

Textual references

Key vocabulary

Advent	a special time of waiting and getting ready for Jesus birthday at Christmastime
candle	a small light used to show something important is happening (hope and prayer)
wreath	a cricle made from leaves that helps us count the weeks to Christmas

Teacher Notes

The Advent Wreath

An Advent wreath helps us count the weeks until Christmas:

- Four candles show the four weeks of Advent.
- Sometimes, a fifth candle is the Christmas Day candle.
- Three of the candles are purple, one is pink, and one is white.
- Christians light one of the candles each Sunday in Advent.
- The wreath is a circle to show God's love is forever.

Advent is the Church's season of hopeful preparation for the celebration of Jesus' birth. Catholic theology frames Advent as prayerful waiting that trains the heart to notice God's coming. The wreath, with candles lit week by week, gives pupils a concrete way to count time and practise patience. Purple signifies preparation and good choices. A rose coloured candle marks joy close to Christmas. The wreath's circle can be taught as a sign of God's unending love, and the candles as light growing in the world. Simple habits such as quiet prayer, saying sorry, and kind actions help pupils join the rhythm of the Church's waiting.

For very young pupils, the focus is that Advent helps us get ready for Jesus. The wreath becomes a concrete visual tool for marking time, supporting early mathematical thinking and spiritual awareness simultaneously. This week should avoid referencing Jesus' birth location or Mary's calling, as these appear elsewhere. Emphasise waiting, hope and the Church's preparation instead.

Teachers may find these videos useful in consolidating their knowledge about Advent: [Advent in 2 minutes](#) and [The Advent wreath explained](#).



Prophecy and Promise

Nursery

Week 4
Celebrate



Nativity celebration. The tradition of the crib.

Know

Christians decorate their house with a nativity scene to help them remember the baby Jesus being born.

Jesus is born and placed into a crib because there is no proper bed for Him.



Discern

Jesus is very special. We can see this in the nativity scene.

Suggested discovery questions

1. How do we know Jesus is special by looking at the nativity scene?
2. Why do some Christians decorate their houses with a Nativity scene at Christmas?
3. Have you seen a nativity scene before? What is the same about the classroom scene, what is different?



Respond

Make a Nativity scene. Include Mary, Joseph and the animals and an empty crib.

Make a Bambinelli (baby Jesus figure) ready to place in the crib after Christmas.

Textual references

Key vocabulary

bambinello	small figure of baby Jesus that may be blessed and then placed in the crib (<i>plural: bambinelli</i>)
crib	animal feeding box used as a small bed for the baby Jesus
nativity	scene that shows the story of Jesus' birth

Teacher Notes

The nativity scene is domestic catechesis that teaches through careful looking. Rooted in Christian practice and popularised by Saint Francis, figures of Mary, Joseph, and an empty crib invite prayerful attention at home and in school. Catholic custom may include a Bambinello, the small figure of baby Jesus blessed before Christmas and placed in the crib at the feast. Encourage pupils to notice who is present, the care shown by each figure, and the space kept for the baby until Christmas Day.

The scene fosters reverence, gratitude, and quiet observation, linking celebration with thoughtful waiting and readiness to welcome Jesus. It gathers key figures and symbols to help believers remember that Jesus is Emmanuel, 'God with us'. Each figure represents an aspect of the story, but the central message is that Jesus' arrival brings hope.

With very young pupils, the nativity scene is a familiar and concrete way to explore who was present when Jesus was born. Encourage pupils to notice the gentleness of the scene and the care shown to the newborn Jesus. Avoid revisiting theological themes about the stable or shepherds that appear in other weeks.



Prophecy and Promise

Nursery
Week 5
Hear



Shepherds hurried to see Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus (Luke 2:8-20).

Know

A shepherd is someone who looks after sheep.

Angels tell some shepherds to visit Jesus.

The shepherds are the first visitors to see Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus.



Discern

The shepherds are full of joy to see the baby Jesus.

Suggested discovery questions

1. How do you think the shepherds feel when they see baby Jesus?
2. What would make you feel really happy like the shepherds?
3. Why do you think Jesus being born makes people smile and feel joy?



Respond

Use the Bible story to role play the angels visiting the shepherds and the shepherds joyfully hurrying to see Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus. Some children may be able to talk about how these characters feel (i.e. their emotions)

Talk about a time you have been filled with joy.

Explore the different ways people can express joy (e.g. smiling, clapping, jumping etc.)

Textual references

An age-appropriate re-telling of the angels announcing Jesus' birth to the shepherds, based on Luke 2: 8-20

Key vocabulary

flock	a group of sheep
joy	feeling really happy inside
shepherd	a person who looks after sheep and pays close attention

Teacher Notes

The shepherds are first witnesses who come to see the newborn. Their vocation is attentive care for living creatures, which disposes them to recognise goodness promptly. Catholic tradition highlights their response of joy and praise, modelling how believers answer good news. Pupils can track the movement from hearing to sharing: the shepherds listen, travel with purpose, see, and then tell others what they have experienced.

This week practices grateful speech and respectful celebration. Joy is expressed through voices, faces, and bodies that show happiness while maintaining gentleness and order. This supports the development of emotional literacy and helps pupils recognise joy as a response to God's love.



Prophecy and Promise

Nursery

Week 6

Live



God sent Jesus to love us all.

Know

God sends His son Jesus into the world to be with us because He loves us.

Jesus loves us so much.

Jesus shows us how to share this love with other people.



Discern

You can show love to other people by what you say and do

Suggested discovery questions

1. How can you make someone feel happy with your words?
2. What are some kind things you can do for your friends or family?
3. How do you feel when someone shows love to you?



Respond

Consider practical ways how you can show love to other people at home, at school, and at church.

Textual references

Key vocabulary

compassion	caring about how someone else feels
kindness	doing something gentle or helpful for another person
love	showing someone they matter through what you say or do

Teacher Notes

Jesus reveals and invites participation in God's love. In Christian tradition this love is more than feeling; it is a steadfast choice to seek the good of others. Catholic theology calls this self-giving charity 'agape'. Pupils learn that love is shown through kind words, helpful actions, patience, and gentle forgiveness at home, school, and church.

Identify people they can help, choose one simple act, and carry it out. The goal is forming habits that make communities caring places, where needs are noticed and responses are thoughtful. Love grows when we speak kindly, act with service, and treat each neighbour with dignity.

The theological content should avoid repeating Incarnation themes or joy, focusing instead on the moral dimension of discipleship: following Jesus by showing love.



Prophecy and Promise

Reception

Week 1
Hear & Believe



The Annunciation (Luke 1:26-31, 38). Mary was chosen by God to give birth to his Son.

Know

Mary is chosen by God.

The angel Gabriel visits Mary and tells her she is going to have a special baby called Jesus, God's son.

Mary trusts God and says 'Yes' to the angel.



Discern

Mary is brave to trust in God. Her faith helped her.

Suggested discovery questions

1. What does it mean to trust God like Mary does?
2. Is it always easy to trust somebody?
3. What does it mean to be brave?



Respond

Discuss who you trust in your life.

Have you ever been chosen to do a special job?

In what ways can you be like Mary?

Textual references

An age-appropriate re-telling of The Annunciation, based on Luke 1:26-31, 38

Key vocabulary

Angel	messenger from God
Brave	doing something even when you feel a little scared because you know it is the right thing to do.
Trust	believing someone will help you or do what they say. Trusting someone makes you feel safe and sure with them.

Teacher Notes

What is the Annunciation?

YouCat for Kids 29: Mary received a message that changed the whole world. The Annunciation is the event when the Angel Gabriel visited the Virgin Mary to announce that she would conceive the Son of God, Jesus, through the Holy Spirit. This moment, described in the Gospel of Luke, marks the beginning of God's plan for humanity's salvation. Mary humbly accepted God's will, saying, 'Let it be done to me according to your word.'

In Reception, pupils can engage more deeply with Mary's response in the Annunciation by exploring the idea of trust as a dimension of faith. Catholic theology teaches that Mary's 'yes' (her fiat) is an act of courageous cooperation with God's plan. Unlike Nursery, where pupils encountered the simple fact that God chose Mary, here the focus expands to Mary's interior disposition: she freely chooses to trust God even though she does not know everything that will happen.

This introduces the concept that faith involves both relationship and trust in God's goodness. The angel's message is not only information but an invitation to enter into God's mission. For pupils with no prior knowledge, this remains a clear starting point: Mary is visited by God's messenger and bravely agrees to a special task. For those with prior Nursery learning, the new nuance is Mary's courage and active faith.

This week should help pupils recognise that trusting someone loving and trustworthy is safe, and that Mary models this with God.

The Annunciation is celebrated by Catholics on 25 March, nine months before Christmas, to honour Mary's acceptance of God's call.



Prophecy and Promise

Reception
Week 2
Live



By our work in Advent, we help others and ourselves and we show our love to God. (CST link: The common good)

Know

During Advent we think about hope, peace, joy and love.

We show our love to God by doing good deeds for other people, just like Jesus does.

Our good deeds during Advent help us get our hearts ready to welcome Jesus.



Discern

The themes of Advent help our hearts prepare for Jesus' birth

Suggested discovery questions

1. How can we use the themes of hope, peace, joy and love in our lives?
2. Do these themes help us to live in a different way?
3. How do you feel when somebody shows you hope/peace/joy/love?



Respond

Hold a prayer service based on the concept of 'the common good'.

Textual references

Key vocabulary

common good	everyone working together so all people can live well
hope	believing that God will help us and that good things can happen
joy	feeling happy because God loves us and we love Him
love	caring for God and for other people by what we say and do
peace	feeling calm and safe because God is with us and choosing kind actions

Teacher Notes

Reception pupils can now consider Advent as a season shaped by themes that guide Christian living: hope, peace, joy and love. Catholic theology links these themes to preparing the heart to welcome Christ. Unlike Nursery, where Advent focused on waiting and symbols, this week introduces moral formation: the idea that our actions shape who we are becoming.

The link to Catholic social teaching, particularly the common good, shows that preparing for Jesus involves concrete choices that help others. Pupils learn that good deeds are not only acts of kindness but responses to God's love. Advent becomes a time to practise the virtues that Jesus embodies.

For pupils without Nursery background, these are new concepts; for those with prior learning, this extends their understanding by exploring how Advent shapes behaviour rather than just marking time.



Prophecy and Promise

Reception

Week 3
Hear & Believe



The Nativity (Luke 2: 4-7) Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger. The Shepherds visit the manger (Luke 2:8-20) Shepherds were told by angels to visit him.

Know

Jesus is born in a stable and laid in a manger (crib).

Angels tell the shepherds to visit Jesus.

The shepherds visit Jesus in the stable.



Discern

Jesus is the Son of God.

Suggested discovery questions

1. Why do the angels tell the Shepherds to visit Jesus?
2. Why do the shepherds hurry to visit Jesus, Mary, and Joseph?
3. How do you think the shepherds feel when they see baby Jesus and know He is God's Son?



Respond

What is it like to visit someone special?

How do you prepare to receive a special visitor?

Textual references

An age-appropriate re-telling of Jesus' birth, including the Shepherds' visit, based on Luke 2:4-20.

Key vocabulary

manger (crib)	animal feeding box that becomes Jesus' first bed
Son of God	a name for Jesus that tells us He is truly God

Teacher Notes

This week deepens pupils' Christological understanding. Rather than simply learning that Jesus was born, Reception pupils consider who Jesus is: the Son of God. This is a foundational Christian belief. Introducing this at an age-appropriate level helps pupils grasp that Jesus is not only a special baby, but God's Son come to live among us.

The shepherds' visit provides a narrative frame: the angels reveal Jesus' identity, and the shepherds respond with joy. For children without Nursery learning, this reintroduces the nativity story, while for those with prior knowledge, the new theological focus is on divine identity rather than the stable or the journey.

Linking Jesus' identity with the idea of being a special visitor supports children's growing understanding of reverence and welcome.



Prophecy and Promise

Reception

Week 4

Celebrate



The tradition of the crib to tell the story of Jesus' birth

Know

Christians decorate their house with a Nativity (crib) scene to help them remember the baby Jesus being born.

St Francis of Assisi made the first crib to show people the story of Jesus' birth, using real animals and people.

St Francis wanted people to feel the Christmas story in a special way by making a crib.



Discern

The first crib helped people understand that Jesus was born in a simple, humble place.

Suggested discovery questions

1. What makes the stable where Jesus was born special?
2. How do the animals and people in the crib help us understand Jesus' story?
3. Why do you think St Francis wanted to show Jesus being born in a simple way?



Respond

Create and gather around a 'living' Nativity scene, in the style of St Francis of Assisi.

Experience the joy of uniting together in prayer and praise of God.

Textual references

Key vocabulary

Teacher Notes

Christians decorate their homes with a Nativity, or crib, at Christmas to remember the birth of Jesus. A Nativity scene usually shows Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus, with shepherds, wise men, angels and animals. It is a way of keeping the story of Jesus' birth close to heart and home.

The tradition of the crib began with St Francis of Assisi in 1223. He wanted people to experience the story of Christmas in a real and simple way. To help them, he made the first crib in a cave in Greccio, Italy. Instead of figures, he used real people and real animals. This helped everyone to see that Jesus was born in a humble place, not a palace.

The stable is special because it shows that God chooses to come close to ordinary people in ordinary places. The animals and people in the crib remind us that everyone is welcome to be part of God's story. St Francis wanted people to feel the wonder of God's love, shown through Jesus' simple birth, and to remember that Christmas is about humility, love and joy.

A traditional stable scene depicts the birth of Jesus, with Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus in a manger, and often includes animals, like an ox and ass, shepherds, and the three wise men. When establishing a scene in school, we don't place the Baby Jesus in the crib until after he has been born.

The three wise men (kings, magi) do not arrive at the stable until the Feast of the Epiphany (6 January). You may have them 'travel' around the classroom as they journey towards the crib.

What do you notice about a Nativity scene?

- Jesus is born in an unusual place for a baby.
- He is born in a place meant to shelter animals.
- The crib is waiting for Jesus in the middle of the scene because He is so special.



Prophecy and Promise

Reception

Week 5

Celebrate & Live



Various cultures celebrate Jesus' birthday in different ways.

Know

Various cultures celebrate Jesus' birthday in different ways; they are all special.

Some people sing songs, some share food, and some act out the Nativity story.

Different Christians celebrate Jesus' birthday on different days.



Discern

No matter how people celebrate, Christmas is always about Jesus being born.

Suggested discovery questions

1. When you see people celebrating Christmas in different ways, how do you remember that it is really about Jesus being born?
2. Why do you think Christians everywhere want to celebrate Jesus' birthday, even if they do it in different ways?
3. How does thinking about Jesus being born make Christmas special for you?



Respond

Identify ways in which people celebrate Jesus' birth differently around the world.

Have you ever experienced another culture's celebration of Christmas?

Textual references

Key vocabulary

Teacher Notes

This week, teachers are free to use the demographic of their pupils to explore celebrations of Christmas that will best engage them. Alternatively, some examples are given below.

Teachers are advised to spend time looking at two different cultural traditions to enable pupils to compare what they share and what is different. More may be explored with pupils, depending on their experiences and confidence in talking about them.

Mexico - Las Posadas

In Mexico, Advent and Christmas are celebrated with 'Las Posadas', a tradition that lasts for nine nights before Christmas. Families walk together through their neighbourhoods, carrying candles and singing carols. They act out Mary and Joseph's search for a place to stay in Bethlehem. Each night, a different home welcomes the group inside, where they share food, prayers and songs. This tradition helps people remember the journey Mary and Joseph made before Jesus was born and shows the importance of welcoming others. It helps children connect to the story of the Nativity in a joyful, active way.

Poland - Oplatek

In Poland, a special tradition happens on Christmas Eve before the main meal, called Wigilia. Families share a thin Christmas wafer, known as 'oplatek'. Each person breaks off a piece of the wafer and offers good wishes to one another for the coming year. This moment is a sign of love, forgiveness and peace, reflecting the message of Jesus' birth. The shared wafer also reminds people that they belong to one family in Christ. For children, this is a simple, visual way of seeing how the Christmas message brings people together in kindness and unity.

Philippines - Parols

In the Philippines, one of the most loved Christmas traditions is making and displaying star-shaped lanterns called 'parols'. These lanterns represent the star that guided the shepherds and wise men to Jesus. They are often brightly coloured, lit up, and hung outside homes, schools and churches. Parols show the joy and light that Jesus brings into the world at Christmas. Families and communities come together to create and enjoy them, which makes the celebration very special. For children, parols provide a clear link between the Christmas story in the Bible and the way Christians still celebrate with light today.

Celebrating Jesus' birth on different days of year

1. 6 January - Orthodox Churches (e.g. Russia, parts of Eastern Europe)

In many Orthodox Christian countries, Jesus' birth is celebrated on 6 January (or 7 January in some places, due to a different calendar). This is called the Feast of the Nativity. The date links to the older Julian calendar, which some churches still follow. The celebrations often begin with a long church service on Christmas Eve, ending at midnight, followed by family feasts.

2. 25 December - Western Churches (e.g. UK, USA, most of Europe)

Most Catholics and many other Christians celebrate Jesus' birth on 25 December. This date is linked with the ancient Roman festival of light in winter, showing Jesus as the 'light of the world'. Christmas Day is celebrated with Mass, family gatherings, gift-giving and special meals. The focus is on the joy of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem.



Prophecy and Promise

Reception

Week 6

Live



All people work in some way. Everyone should be able to work safely so that it helps them because God loves them. (CST link: The dignity and rights of workers)

Know

God creates us as one global family to support our brothers and sisters.

All people can do some work to help themselves and to help others.

Christmas is a time of year when it is especially important to show love to others.



Discern

Jesus shows us how to love others. At Christmas time we celebrate Jesus coming into the world.

Suggested discovery questions

1. How does Jesus coming into the world make people happy?
2. Why do we celebrate Jesus coming into the world at Christmas?
3. What can you do at Christmas to make someone feel loved?



Respond

Explore how your God-given gifts can be used for the benefit of others (e.g. a police officer, lollipop person etc.)

Review Catholic life and mission activities you have taken part in during Advent, within the context of working to show love to others:

- Were you given a special job?
- How did you bring hope/peace/joy/love to other people?
- Have you had to use trust?
- Have you had to be brave?

(Relevant activities might include a reverse Advent calendar, foodbank collections etc.)

Textual references

Key vocabulary

Teacher Notes

Jesus is God's Son and He comes into the world to show everyone how much God loves us. His birth is a very special gift for all people. When Jesus is born, people are happy because God's love is with us in a new way. The angels in Luke 2 tell the shepherds, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy.' This shows that Jesus' coming brings happiness and hope.

We celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas to remember this amazing gift of love. Families and churches use traditions such as singing carols, decorating with lights and Nativity scenes, and giving gifts to show love for each other. These celebrations help people feel joy and share God's love, making Christmas a time of happiness, kindness, and thinking about Jesus coming into the world.

Jesus' birth shows that every person has value because God loves everyone. At Christmas, we celebrate His coming and remember that people who work hard, like the shepherds and Joseph, are important too. Catholic social teaching teaches us about the dignity and rights of workers. This means everyone should be treated fairly, have safe work, and receive enough to live well. When we give gifts, share food, or help others at Christmas, we remember God's love and show respect for all people, especially those who work to care for others.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 1

Week 1

Hear & Believe



U1.2.2

Be introduced to the Bible as a special book and encounter the stories and accounts of how people came to know God and the Good News of Jesus in the gospels.

Know

The Bible is a special, holy book that tells us about God and how He loves everyone.

The Bible is split into two parts, the Old Testament and New Testament. The whole Bible records how people grow to know God.

The gospels record the Good News that Jesus brings us.



Discern

God loves us so much; He sends Jesus to bring us the Good News. This is recorded in the Bible.

Suggested discovery questions

1. Which story about God's love in the Bible do you like best, and why?
2. Which story about Jesus sharing the Good News do you like most, and why does it make you feel happy or special?
3. Which part of the Bible stories about Jesus would you like to hear again, and why do you prefer it over the others?



Respond

Listen to each other's reasons for choosing favourite Bible stories and accounts.

Did your favourite Bible story or account teach you a special message?

Did you, or could you, do anything differently because of this special message?

Textual references

Key vocabulary

Gospel 'Good News'

Teacher Notes

Teacher to model how to express a preference for a favourite Bible story with a relevant reason.

Reiterate that the Bible is a good book, using the words and phrases 'sacred', 'holy', and 'from God'.

How do people come to know the Good News of Jesus in the gospels?

In the New Testament, people listen to Jesus, witness His miracles and learn how to show love to God and to others. This is part of His Good News.

The New Testament is part of the Canon of Scripture (set of books) which is at the heart of the faith of the Christian Church.

The New Testament covers the events of the period of time from Jesus birth, through his ministry, to his death, resurrection and ascension to Heaven. It also follows the events in the life of the early Church from the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost through to the establishment of various Christian communities.

The four Gospels: these are attributed to the four evangelists: St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John. The Gospels are accounts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The word Gospel literally means 'Good News'. The Gospel writers are referred to as evangelists because an evangelist is a person who seeks to proclaim to others the Christian faith.

The Gospels were only written down many years after Pentecost. In the early life of the Church the stories and events were part of the oral tradition and the Good News was spread by word of mouth. However, the realisation that those who remembered these key events and teachings were aging as well as the political events of the time made it necessary for a written record to be produced and kept for future generations.

Each of the Gospel writers is writing at a particular time for a particular audience. Each writer, in his own way, reveals something about God the Father, his relationship with us through Jesus his Son and the power of the Holy Spirit. Whilst there are many common events, sayings and teachings of Jesus in the Gospels there are also variations between the Gospels. It is evident that Mark, Matthew and Luke were reliant on a written source which they may have shared in common, but they also had other sources of information passed on through the oral tradition in their own communities.

This is an opportunity for children to explore accessible Bibles suitable for this age and stage. This can include individual Bible story books by children's authors including Mick Inkpen, Nick Butterworth.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 1

Week 2
Hear & Believe



U1.2.4

Know that in the Annunciation God called Mary and she said 'Yes' to his call and why this makes Mary important for Christians.

Know

The Angel Gabriel announces to Mary that God is calling her to be Jesus' mother.

Mary trusts God and says 'Yes' to His call, even when she is puzzled.

Mary is a role model for Christians because she shows faith and trust in God.



Discern

Mary's 'Yes' to God's call is very important. It changes the whole world.

Suggested discovery questions

1. Think of times when saying 'Yes' to somebody else is the right thing to do. (e.g. a family member or teacher). How does saying 'yes' make you feel?
2. Is it always easy to say 'Yes' to somebody else?
3. What if Mary said 'No' to the Angel Gabriel?



Respond

Think of different ways we can say 'yes' to the gospel's challenges: showing love to God and other people; being kind; being a good steward of creation; giving to charity.

I wonder...How different the world could be in the future if everybody said 'Yes' to God?

Textual references

Luke 1: 26-32, 38

The Annunciation

Key vocabulary

Angel messenger from God

Teacher Notes

Luke's Gospel was written around the same time as Matthew's. Luke is writing for a Gentile (a person who is non-Jewish) audience who are part of the non-Jewish world. Luke's Gospel is also sometimes described as a 'Gospel for the poor or hopeless' because Luke exalts and gives a special place to the lowly people who encountered Jesus. These include the shepherds who are given the news of the saviour's birth on Christmas night. He also includes the story of Jesus' presentation where Simeon declares that Jesus is 'A light to reveal your will to the Gentiles' (Luke 2: 32) thus emphasising that Jesus is Lord for all and not just the people of Israel.

Shepherds were among the poorest in society at this time. The shepherds are the first to hear the good news. Luke emphasises the role of Jesus' salvation for the poor and marginalised.

The name Gabriel means 'Warrior of God.'

When presenting images of the Annunciation, use a range of images of Mary from the Universal Church.





Prophecy and Promise

Year 1
Weeks 3 & 4
Hear & Believe

 U1.2.3 U1.2.6	Sequence the accounts from the Annunciation through to the visit of the shepherds. Recognise that angels bring God's message that Jesus is the Son of God.
<i>Know</i>	Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, who is also expecting a baby, and they share their joy together. Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem, where Jesus is born and placed in a manger because there is no room at the inn. Angels bring God's message to the shepherds, who hurry to see baby Jesus and then tell others the Good News.

 D1.2.1	Talk about why the shepherds saw angels when Jesus was born.
<i>Discern</i>	Angels always bring special messages. Their message is given to shepherds to show that Jesus' Good News is for all people. Suggested discovery questions 1. How do you feel when you receive some good news? How do others feel when you share your good news with them? 2. Out of all the people in the world, why do you think God sends angels to shepherds who are poor, who are watching their sheep at night? 3. The angels say that Jesus' birth is 'Good News for all people'. How do you feel knowing that this Good News is for you too?

 <i>Respond</i>	Hold a short service where you give thanks for things God has blessed you with (e.g. a litany of thanks)
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Textual references

Luke 1:26-38	The Annunciation
Luke 1:39-45	The Visitation
Luke 2:4-7	Jesus' Birth
Luke 2:8-20	The Shepherds' Visit

Key vocabulary

Teacher Notes

There are usually 5 elements in annunciations (visitations from angels):

- i. The angel appears
- ii. The person is afraid
- iii. The angel gives reassurance
- iv. The person objects
- v. The angel gives a sign

The Angel Gabriel comes to Nazareth to deliver the news to Mary. The angel's words are used by Catholics in the Hail Mary prayer.

Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth and tells her that she is going to have a baby. Elizabeth tells Mary that she is also pregnant. Elizabeth says, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!' (again, words used by Catholics in the Hail Mary... something pupils will explore in Week 5.)

Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem to register for the census - showing, from the very start of His earthly life, that Jesus did not come to break rules, but fulfil what was required of Him. Whilst they are there, Mary gives birth to the baby Jesus and lays him in a manger.

An angel visits some shepherds on nearby hills and tells them that Jesus Christ has been born. Lots of angels suddenly appear and sing, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of goodwill.' This tells the shepherds that the baby Jesus is the Son of God. The shepherds hurry to Bethlehem to visit the baby Jesus, Mary, and Joseph and tell them what had happened. The shepherds go back to the hillsides, praising God. The fact that the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, was first announced to lowly shepherds shows that He came to save everyone, including the poor and lowly, the outcasts of society. In fact, throughout His earthly life, Jesus frequently prioritised these groups of people over the wealthy.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 1

Week 5

Celebrate

	U1.2.5 Match the first words of the Hail Mary with the words of the Angel Gabriel.
Know	The Hail Mary begins with the words: 'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee', which are from The Annunciation. The Hail Mary continues with the words: 'blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus', which are from The Visitation. The words of the Gloria praise God for bringing us the Good News and the message of peace.

	D1.2.2 Think about why the words of the angels are in the 'Hail Mary' and the beginning of the 'Gloria'.	
Discern	The words of the angels used in the Hail Mary and the Gloria are important. They are songs of praise to God.	Suggested discovery questions 1. The angels use their voices to praise God with joy. How do you feel when you use your voice to say or sing prayers, and why? 2. Which of these words do you like best, and why do you think they are important? 3. When we pray the Hail Mary or the Gloria, we are joining in the angels' song. Do you like joining in with the angels' song, and why?

	R1.2.1 Hear and begin to join in with the words of the Hail Mary R1.2.2 Sing or say the first words of the Gloria.
Respond	Sing and/or pray the words of the Hail Mary and illustrate the key phrases within prayer. Using prayer journalling, explore key words from the start of the Gloria that stand out to you.

Textual references

Words used in the Hail Mary

Luke 1:28

'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you'

Luke 1:42

'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb'

Words used in the Gloria

Luke 2:14

'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of goodwill'

Key vocabulary

Gloria	a prayer praising God for bringing the Good News and the message of peace to the whole world
Hail	'rejoice' or 'be glad'
Hail Mary	a prayer expressing God is with Mary and He has chosen her for a special role

Teacher Notes

The Hail Mary is based on the words of the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation and Elizabeth (Mary's cousin) at the Visitation. Gabriel greets Mary and shares God's plan for her. Elizabeth is the first to acknowledge Mary's role in God's plan. In this prayer we ask Mary to pray for us/intercede for us both in the present moment and at the moment of our death. It forms the basis of other Marian prayers : The Rosary and the Angelus.

Some of the phrases in this Marian prayer are associated with the Solemnity of the Annunciation (usually commemorated 25 March). These are 'full of grace', 'the Lord is with you', 'Blessed are you among women.'

The phrase 'Holy Mary Mother of God' emphasises the Catholic belief in Mary's place in the Church.

Sung versions can also be used.

The words from the Gloria ('Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to people of goodwill' - Luke 2:14) show that God is with Mary and He has chosen her for a special role.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 1

Week 6

Believe & Live

	U1.2.1 Recognise that, for Christians, the Christmas story reveals God's love by sending Jesus his Son.
<i>Know</i>	God loves the world so much. God sends His only Son, Jesus into the world. This is revealed in the gospels' accounts of Christmas.

	D1.2.3 Explore artistic representations of the Nativity story from around the world.	
<i>Discern</i>	People from around the world show the Nativity account in their own special ways. They all show God's love for us.	Suggested discovery questions, based on studying a small selection of relevant artworks 1. Which Nativity picture or model do you like best and why do you feel that way? 2. Which piece of artwork do you think best shows the events of the Nativity and why? 3. How do artworks, sculptures and music show honour to Mary?

	R1.2.3 Talk about how Christians in their local community celebrate the birth of Jesus.	
<i>Respond</i>	How do Christians celebrate in preparation for the birth of Jesus? (e.g. Mass, Christmas Carol Services, Nativities) Participate in helping to celebrate Jesus' birth in your parish and local area by making Christmas cards based on the gospel accounts studied. Create a short video documenting how your school is preparing to celebrate Jesus' birth.	

Textual references

Key vocabulary

Teacher Notes

Son of God: 'God shows us in Jesus Christ the full depth of his merciful love. Through Jesus Christ the invisible God becomes visible. He becomes a man like us. This shows us how far God's love goes: He bears our whole burden. He walks every path with us. He is there in our abandonment, our sufferings, our fear of death. He is there when we can go no farther, so as to open up for us the door leading into life.' *YouCat* 9

Suggested websites to explore artistic representations of the Nativity from around the world: [Cultivated Learning](#) and [The Jesus Question](#).

Pupils can explore religious Christmas card featuring images of Mary, angels and the shepherds.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 2

Week 1

Hear & Believe



U2.2.2

Know that a prophet or prophetess communicates God's message, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that Isaiah and John the Baptist are prophets.

Know

A prophet is a person who listens to God, through the Holy Spirit, and shares His messages.

Isaiah is a prophet in the Old Testament. He tells people that a saviour (Jesus) is coming!

John the Baptist is a prophet who lived at the same time as Jesus, revealing His identity.



Discern

Passing on messages about God can make a positive difference in the world. They can help people to grow to know God better.

Suggested discovery questions

1. If Isaiah tells people something God wants them to know, why might listening to him help people grow closer to God?
2. John the Baptist shared God's message with lots of people. How do you think sharing God's message can make a difference in the world?
3. Can you think of a time when someone told you something kind or important that helped you do the right thing? How is that like what a prophet does?



Respond

Communicate to someone about something that is really important to you. How do you communicate this message well?

Challenge yourself to do something inspirational to help other people.

Reflect on yourself as a modern-day prophet. What messages from God in the Bible would you share?

Textual references

Isaiah 6:8
Isaiah 7:14
Isaiah 9:6
Luke 3:16
John 1:29
Matthew 3:1-6

Isaiah answers God's call and is ready to share His messages
Isaiah tells people that God will send a Saviour, Jesus
Isaiah shares God's message about the coming Saviour
John the Baptist tells people about Jesus, who is part of God's plan
John the Baptist reveals that Jesus is God's chosen one
John the Baptist teaches people to be sorry for their sins and prepares them for Jesus

Key vocabulary

Teacher Notes

The ministry of the prophets was to remind the people of the Covenant God had made with them and call them back to faithfulness to the Covenant. The writings of the prophets point out how people had turned away from God and the difficulties they may face. However, they also spoke about the joy and consolation of God and His faithfulness to them despite their sinfulness.

'God sends prophets to His people to call them to conversion and to the renewal of the covenant. The prophets proclaim that God will establish a new and everlasting covenant, which will bring about a radical renewal and definitive redemption. This covenant will be open to all human beings.' (*YouCat* 8)

Isaiah

Isaiah is a prophet called by God to guide His people in Israel. God speaks to Isaiah and inspires him through the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 6:1–8). Isaiah tells people to turn back to God and live holy lives. He gives messages of hope, promising that God will send a Messiah to save His people (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6–7; 11:1–10). Catholics believe these prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Isaiah reminds people that God is loving and merciful, but also just, and that following God leads to peace and happiness. Even when people ignore him, Isaiah continues to share God's message faithfully. Through his words, Catholics learn how prophets help people know God, trust Him, and prepare their hearts for His plans. Isaiah's teachings show the importance of listening to God and living in His love.

John the Baptist

John the Baptist is a prophet chosen by God to prepare the way for Jesus. The angel Gabriel tells his father Zechariah that John will be 'great in the sight of the Lord' and will help people turn back to God (Luke 1:15–17). John calls people to repent, which means to say sorry for their sins and try to live in God's way. He baptises people in the Jordan River as a sign of their desire to follow God (Matthew 3:1–6). John also points people to Jesus, saying, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' (John 1:29). Guided by the Holy Spirit, John teaches people about God's love and helps them prepare for Jesus' coming. By listening to John, people begin to understand God's plan for salvation and how important it is to live in His way.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 2

Week 2

Hear & Believe

	U2.2.1 Retell, in detail, the religious accounts from the Annunciation and the birth of John the Baptist.
<i>Know</i>	An angel tells Zechariah that he and Elizabeth will have a baby called John, who will help people get ready for Jesus. Elizabeth has her baby, and when everyone asks his name, Zechariah writes 'John' as the angel said, showing he listens to God. The people are amazed and filled with joy because they know God has a special plan for the baby, John the Baptist.

 <i>Discern</i>	D2.2.2 Say what they wonder about the Holy Spirit and how baby John the Baptist, Elizabeth, and Zechariah felt.
	Suggested discovery questions 1. What do you wonder about the Holy Spirit? 2. Why does the Holy Spirit choose people such as John the Baptist, Elizabeth and Zechariah to communicate God's message? 3. Why do you think Elizabeth says that her baby should be called John? Would you agree with her?

 <i>Respond</i>	Reflect upon the impact the Holy Spirit has on Elizabeth and Zechariah in the Annunciation accounts. Is it always easy or difficult to do as God asks? How do you think God feels when people do as He asks of them?
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Textual references

Luke 1:5-20
Luke 1:57-66

The Annunciation of John the Baptist's birth
John the Baptist's birth

Key vocabulary

Teacher Notes

Zechariah and Elizabeth are of a priestly background and served in the temple of Jerusalem. As a priest, Zechariah would take his turn serving in the temple twice a year for a week at a time. Zechariah regains his speech when he acknowledges the name of his son given to him by God. The hymn Zechariah sings (i.e. the Benedictus) is a morning prayer canticle used as part of the Liturgy of the Hours (daily prayer in the Catholic Church). It describes John the Baptist's role in salvation history. John the Baptist will next be encountered in the desert in Luke chapter 3.

Why the Holy Spirit chose John the Baptist, Elisabeth, and Zechariah

The Holy Spirit chooses certain people because they are faithful and ready to listen to God. Elizabeth and Zechariah are a good example. Zechariah is a priest, and God sends the angel Gabriel to tell him that he and Elizabeth will have a son, even though they are very old (Luke 1:5–25). This child will be John the Baptist, who prepares people for Jesus. Elizabeth listens carefully to God's plan and trusts Him completely. Her acceptance shows that God works through ordinary people who are faithful. Zechariah, although initially hesitant, confirms God's message by naming the child John as instructed (Luke 1:57–63). Their actions ensure that John is born at the right time and is recognised as a prophet. Together, Elizabeth and Zechariah cooperate with God, helping to bring His plan of salvation into the world.

Why Elizabeth named her baby John

When Elizabeth is told she will have a son, she knows this is God's special plan (Luke 1:13–14). The angel told Zechariah the baby's name will be John, and Elizabeth agrees because God chooses the name. In the Bible, a name is very important; it shows who a person is and what God wants them to do. John means 'God is gracious', and it reminds people that God gives His love freely. By calling her baby John, Elizabeth shows she listens to God and trusts His plan. Catholics learn that listening to God and following His instructions is always the right choice (Luke 1:45). We can agree with Elizabeth because she is helping God's plan to happen. John grows up to be a prophet, telling people about Jesus and helping them prepare their hearts to meet Him.

The Annunciation of John the Baptist's birth

- Zechariah and Elizabeth are good people who love God. They are old and have no children.
- Zechariah, a priest, is in the temple praying when the Angel Gabriel appears.
- The Angel Gabriel tells Zechariah 'Your wife Elizabeth will have a baby boy, and you must name him John'.
- The Angel Gabriel tells Zechariah that his son will be very special and will bring lots of people back to God.
- Zechariah does not believe the Angel Gabriel because he and Elizabeth are very old to have a child.
- The Angel Gabriel makes him unable to speak until the baby is born.

John the Baptist's birth

- Elizabeth has a son, just as the Angel Gabriel promises.
- Her family and friends are so happy because God blesses her.
- Eight days after he is born, Elizabeth and Zechariah take the baby to the temple to be named.
- People think the baby would be named Zechariah, like his father, but Elizabeth says, 'No, his name is John!'.
- The people are surprised and ask Zechariah what he thinks the baby should be called. He speaks for the first time since the Angel Gabriel visited him.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 2

Week 3

Hear, Believe & Live



U2.2.3

Identify Zechariah's special message about John's future

Know

Zechariah says that John will be called a prophet of the Most High.

Zechariah says John will help people know God and prepare their hearts for Jesus.

Zechariah says John will teach people how to live good lives and forgive their sins.



D2.2.2

Say what they wonder about the Holy Spirit and how baby John the Baptist, Elizabeth, and Zechariah felt.

Discern

The Holy Spirit helps John, Elizabeth, and Zechariah know God's plan and feel happy, surprised, or amazed as they shared His special messages.

Suggested discovery questions

1. What do you think it was like for Zechariah when the angel told him about John? How might he have felt surprised or worried, and why?
2. If you were Elizabeth and suddenly found out you would have a baby in God's special plan, what would you wonder about or be excited to do?
3. How do you think the Holy Spirit helped John, Elizabeth, and Zechariah know what to do? What might it feel like to be guided by God's Spirit?



Respond

How can you prepare for somebody important? (e.g. cleaning the house for a guest; making a birthday card for a good friend; preparing a meal for people in your home etc.) What attitudes do you need to be able to do this? (e.g. kindness, love, selflessness, compassionate etc.) What negative attitudes might make this difficult? (e.g. selfishness, laziness, unkindness etc.)

How do you think God wants us to transform our hearts? (e.g. to be kinder to people, to listen attentively, to say sorry when you've done something wrong, to pray more and talk to God etc.)

Reflect on your attitudes using an examination of conscience.

Textual references

Luke 1:76-77

Zechariah's prophecy

Key vocabulary

Teacher Notes

This lesson introduces pupils to the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding God's people and helping them recognise God's plan. In Luke's Gospel, Zechariah, Elizabeth and John the Baptist are each drawn into God's saving mission through the Spirit's action. Catholic theology teaches that the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, active long before Pentecost, inspiring faith, courage and prophecy.

Zechariah's prophecy (Luke 1:67–79) describes John's unique vocation: he will be a prophet of the Most High who prepares people for the coming of Jesus. John's mission focuses on helping people turn their hearts back to God, seek forgiveness and choose what is good. This anticipates Jesus' ministry and reveals that God prepares His people gradually through signs, promises and Spirit-filled individuals.

For pupils, the key understanding is that God's Spirit helps people know what is right, strengthens them to carry out difficult tasks and guides them towards love and goodness. By reflecting on feelings such as surprise, joy or wonder, children connect emotionally with Zechariah and Elizabeth while recognising that the Holy Spirit continues to guide Christians today.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 2

Week 4

Believe, Celebrate & Live

 U2.2.6	Describe some ways that Christians prepare for Jesus' coming at Christmas during the season of Advent. Correctly using religious words and phrases to recognise the meaning given to the Advent wreath and how these might help Christians prepare for Christmas.	
Know	Christians use an Advent wreath with candles to help them think about Jesus the Light of World coming at Christmas and to pray or reflect each week. The candles on the Advent wreath can be different colours, like purple, pink, or red, and each colour reminds Christians about God's love, hope, joy, and the light of Jesus. The Advent wreath also symbolises our waiting and expectation for Christ to come again at the end of time.	

 D2.2.3 D2.2.4	Talk about how other cultures and communities prepare in Advent, for example, through art, dance, music, or celebrations such as Las Posadas. Listening to different traditions and interpretations of the meaning of the Advent wreath.	
Discern	Christians from around the world show their preparations for Jesus' birth in their own special ways. These traditions all guide Christians to share God's light with others.	Suggested discovery questions (you may select one or more traditions to explore with pupils) 1. See teacher notes for questions relating to specific traditions. 2. Some Christians use only red candles on their Advent wreaths. Why might they do this?

 Respond	What do you do to prepare for Jesus' birth at school, at home, and at church? Which Advent preparations from other cultures and communities do you like the best? e.g. singing, dancing, opening doors, lighting candles etc?
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Textual references

Key vocabulary

Teacher Notes

Further guidance for the second Respond activity

1. Listening/Sharing

Explain:

- 'In Mexico, people sing and walk together in Las Posadas.'
- 'In Africa, people use drums and dance to praise God.'
- 'In Germany, children open doors on an Advent calendar.'
- 'In many churches, people light candles on an Advent wreath.'

Ask: 'Which way do you like best? Singing, dancing, opening doors, or lighting candles?'

2. Respond by Drawing

Give them a candle outline on paper (or let them draw one).

- If they choose singing, they can draw music notes on their candle.
- If they choose dancing, they can draw people moving with joy.
- If they choose Advent calendars, they can draw little doors.
- If they choose candles, they can colour theirs purple, pink, or white.

3. Reflection (simple prayer or thought)

End by saying together, 'Jesus, we are getting ready for you. Thank you for hope, peace, joy, and love.'

Las Posadas

- How does the Las Posadas tradition of Latin America help prepare Christians for the birth of Christ at Christmas?
- Have you been on a long journey? How did it feel when you arrived at your destination?

Las Posadas is a traditional celebration in Latin America that helps Christians remember and prepare for the birth of Jesus. The name means 'the inns' in Spanish. Each year, during the nine days before Christmas, communities and families take part in processions that follow Mary and Joseph on their journey to Bethlehem. People sing songs, carry candles, and knock on doors to ask for a place to stay, just like Mary and Joseph did (Luke 2:1–7). This tradition helps Christians think about the courage, trust, and faith that Mary and Joseph showed, and how they relied on God during their journey. By participating in Las Posadas, children and adults reflect on the true meaning of Christmas: preparing their hearts to welcome Jesus. It also encourages kindness, hospitality, and community, showing how Christians can live God's love in their daily lives.

Christingles

- How does the European tradition of making Christingles symbolise preparations for Christmas?
- Which of these symbols best helps you to understand the meaning of Advent? Why?

The Christingle is a Christian tradition in Europe that helps people think about preparing for Christmas. A Christingle is an orange decorated with a red ribbon, sweets or dried fruit on cocktail sticks, and a candle. Each part has a special meaning. The orange represents the world, the red ribbon reminds Christians of Jesus' love and the blood he shed, the sweets or fruit represent God's gifts and the fruits of the earth, and the candle shows that Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). Making and lighting a Christingle helps Christians remember God's love and prepare their hearts to welcome Jesus at Christmas. The tradition also encourages generosity and sharing, as children often raise money for others while making Christingles. By taking part, families and communities reflect on God's plan and celebrate the joy and hope of Jesus' coming.

Tsome Gena

- How do the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian traditions of fasting and praying during Advent (Tsome Gena) help focus believers' minds on preparing for Jesus' birth?
- Do the acts of going without and praying extra help transform people's hearts and minds to welcome Jesus at Christmas?

In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Advent is called Tsome Gena. During this time, believers fast and pray to prepare their hearts for the birth of Jesus. Fasting means they eat less or give up certain foods, which helps them focus on God rather than on everyday comforts. Prayer and special church services help them think about God's love and the coming of Christ (Luke 2:1–7). By spending time in prayer and reflection, they remember the courage and faith of Mary and Joseph as they prepared for Jesus' birth. This time also encourages patience, self-discipline, and generosity, reminding Christians to care for others and grow closer to God. Tsome Gena helps people focus on the true meaning of Christmas, preparing their hearts and minds to celebrate the joy, hope, and love that Jesus brings into the world.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 2

Week 5

Hear & Believe

	U2.2.4 Recognise that the Church teaches that the person Isaiah spoke of was Jesus long before he was born.
<i>Know</i>	The prophet Isaiah speaks to people about the future birth of Jesus, whose justice and peace will last for ever. Isaiah says Jesus (Immanuel) will bring a great light to the people who are living in darkness. Isaiah says that Jesus will bring understanding about how people should live their lives.

	D2.2.1 Talk about Isaiah's picture language about light and darkness (Isaiah 9:1-2) and make simple links with Jesus.	
<i>Discern</i>	People are in the dark when they feel sad or lost. Jesus shows us the right way to go by teaching us how to love and be kind.	Suggested discovery questions 1. How does it make you feel when you are in the dark? In the light? 2. How do you think Jesus is like a light for people? 3. Isaiah gives people hope that things will get better. How can you bring hope to someone who is feeling sad or lonely?

	R2.2.2 Use artistic expressions to create a personal response to Isaiah's picture language about light and darkness (Isaiah 9:1-2).	
<i>Respond</i>	Create a piece of artwork that shows the contrast between light and dark (e.g. create a stained-glass window using tissue paper) Decorate a paper candle with words and pictures that remind you of how Jesus brings light (love, kindness, and hope) into your life. What would you do to transform the world during Advent? Keep a chart to record your transformational acts. Each time you do something kind, colour in a star to light the way for Jesus.	

Textual references

Isaiah 7:17
Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Prophecy of the virgin birth
Isaiah shares God's message about the coming Saviour

Key vocabulary

Immanuel

God with us

Teacher Notes

Isaiah's picture language

In Isaiah 9:1–2, the prophet uses pictures to help people understand God's message. He talks about darkness and light. The 'darkness' represents sadness, fear, or times when people feel far from God. The 'light' shows hope, joy, and God's presence bringing help and love. Isaiah tells the people that God promises a great light will come, which will shine for everyone and guide them out of darkness.

Catholics believe this light is Jesus. When Jesus is born, he brings God's love and hope into the world, helping people see the right way to live. Just like the light in a dark room helps people see, Jesus helps people know God and feel safe, happy, and loved.

The prophet Isaiah's vision for the future of Israel describes the enthronement of the king (Immanuel/Jesus) who will rule over the Israel created by God's new act of grace, and he will trust in the faithfulness and power of God. 'He will be an authentic representative of God on earth and will bring an all-embracing and a never-ending peace to God's people. His kingdom will be sustained by justice.

Teachers can help children imagine what it feels like when a light shines in a dark place and then connect it to how Jesus brings light into our hearts. This helps children understand the meaning of Jesus as the 'Light of the World' (John 8:12) in a simple, visual way.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 2

Week 6

Believe, Celebrate & Live

	U2.2.5 Recognise that the Church teaches that Mary is the mother of God who prays for them and with them.
<i>Know</i>	Mary is the mother of Jesus, who is God's Son, so the Church calls her the Mother of God. Mary prays for us and with us because she loves and cares for us and wants to help us. The Magnificat prayer is a canticle or song of joy and praise of Mary's great love for God and His goodness.

 <i>Discern</i>	Suggested discovery questions 1. How does Mary show love for Jesus in her life, for example by keeping Him safe or taking Him to learn about God? How can we show love like her? 2. Mary trusts God even when things are hard, like travelling to Bethlehem or staying strong when Jesus is on the Cross. How can we trust God when life is difficult? 3. How is Mary seen as being a role model for mothers by the Church?
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	R2.2.1 Talk about Mary's prayer, the Magnificat (Lk 1:46-50, 53) and how they can make the world fairer. For example, how they could fill the hungry with good things in Advent or what choices they could make in Advent to support local and global communities in need and to care for Creation (CST).
<i>Respond</i>	Regular, repeated opportunities for communally praying the Magnificat, starting and ending with the Sign of the Cross. Give pupils a simple version of the Magnificat with key phrases highlighted, e.g., 'He fills the hungry with good things'. Ask pupils to choose one phrase and draw or write one way they could act on it during Advent. For example, donating food, sharing toys, or helping at home. Create a chart with categories such as 'Helping at home', 'Caring for others locally', 'Supporting global communities', and 'Caring for Creation'. Pupils write or draw one small choice they could make in each category during Advent.

Textual references

Luke 1:46-55

The Magnificat

Key vocabulary

The Magnificat a hymn of praise sung by Mary in Luke's Gospel

Teacher Notes

The Magnificat

The Magnificat prayer or canticle (a song or chant containing words from Scripture) is a song of joy (Luke 1:46-55). In this song Our Lady is singing in her humble role as God's servant, 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.' She is also singing as the Mother of God and of the Church because the hope expressed in the Old Testament is being fulfilled 'even as he promised our fathers, Abraham and his descendants forever. Another element of this prayer is her declaration that "people forever will call me blessed.' The Evening Prayer of the Church said by priests and religious everyday includes the Magnificat.

Mary as a role model for mothers

The Catholic Church teaches that Mary is a special role model for all mothers because of the way she loves, trusts, and prays. Mary loves her son, Jesus, deeply. She holds Him, keeps Him safe, and takes Him to the Temple so He can learn about God (Luke 2:22-24). Her love shows how mothers care for their children and guide them to grow close to God.

Mary also trusts God, even when life is hard. She travels to Bethlehem while pregnant, and later, she stays strong at the foot of the Cross when Jesus suffers (Luke 2:4-7; John 19:25-27). Her trust in God helps her do what is right, even in difficult situations.

Mary prays throughout her life and continues to pray for all people. She reflects quietly on God's plans in her heart, as after the Annunciation and the shepherds' visit, and she praises God in the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 971, 2676) teaches that Mary is the Mother of God and intercedes for us, showing her unique role in salvation. The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception (Pius IX, 1854) reminds us that Mary is completely holy and a model of perfect love and faith for all mothers.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 3

Week 1

Hear & Believe

	U3.2.1 Recognise that Sunday is a holy day for Christians, making simple links between the story of Creation (Genesis 1:1-2:4) and Sunday as a day of rest.
<i>Know</i>	Christians believe that Sunday is a special, holy day because it is the day Jesus rises from the dead. In the Creation story, God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Christians link God's rest to Sunday, using it as a day to worship at church, pray, rest, and spend time helping others.

 <i>Discern</i>	God rests on the seventh day, showing us that taking a break is good for us and helps us feel closer to Him. <table border="1" data-bbox="884 566 2128 877"> <tr> <th data-bbox="884 566 1232 598">Suggested discovery questions</th> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1232 566 2128 877"> 1. In the Creation story, why do you think God rests on the seventh day after making the world in six days? 2. If God had not rested on the seventh day after creating the world, how might that change the way people think about rest today? 3. Some people rest by being quiet, others by spending time with family or helping others. Which way do you think shows God's love best, and why? </td> </tr> </table>	Suggested discovery questions	1. In the Creation story, why do you think God rests on the seventh day after making the world in six days? 2. If God had not rested on the seventh day after creating the world, how might that change the way people think about rest today? 3. Some people rest by being quiet, others by spending time with family or helping others. Which way do you think shows God's love best, and why?
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 <i>Respond</i>	Design the 'perfect Sunday' to help people rest and feel close to God. What activities would you include? (e.g, going to Mass, spending time in prayer, spending time with family etc.) Consider how your perfect Sunday would impact you, your family, and the communities to which you belong.
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Textual references

Genesis 1:1-2:4

The creation of the world (aka 'The six days of Creation')

Key vocabulary

holy day	a special day set aside for God
Resurrection	Jesus rising from the dead on the first Easter
sacrifice	offering something valuable to God or for the good of others

Teacher Notes

This week helps pupils connect two core elements of Christian belief: the Creation narrative and Sunday as a holy day. In Genesis, God creates the world in an ordered, purposeful way and rests on the seventh day. Catholic teaching understands this rest not as tiredness but as delight in creation and a model for human flourishing. Rest is woven into God's design for life; it reflects balance, gratitude and trust in God's provision.

Christians link God's rest with Sunday because Sunday is the day of the Resurrection. Jesus gives His life on the Cross so that our sins are forgiven, meaning we can enjoy eternal life with God in heaven - this is Jesus' ultimate sacrifice. Early Christians began gathering on the first day of the week to celebrate that Jesus rose from the dead, making Sunday a weekly 'mini-Easter'. Over time, Sunday became the primary day of worship, prayer, community and acts of love.

The key insight is that Sunday rest is not simply leisure but a spiritual practice. It invites people to step back from work, reconnect with God, appreciate creation and care for others. This supports a deeper understanding that worship, rest and service are connected ways of honouring God and living well.

Please note, some Catholics attend a Saturday Vigil Mass (in place of a Sunday Mass) which fulfils the obligation for Catholics to attend Mass on a Sunday.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 3

Week 2

Believe & Celebrate

	U3.2.2 Give a simple description of how Catholics celebrate the Mass.
<i>Know</i>	Catholics celebrate Mass to worship God and remember what He has done for us by gathering, singing, saying sorry, listening to the Bible, and learning from the priest. At the altar, bread and wine are offered to God, and Catholics believe they become the Body and Blood of Jesus, called the Eucharist. At the end of Mass, the priest blesses everyone and sends them out to love and help others in their daily lives.

	D3.2.1 Talk, ask, and answer questions about their experiences of liturgies and the Mass.	
<i>Discern</i>	Mass is a special time when Catholics pray together, hear God's word, receive the Eucharist, and grow closer to God by giving thanks and learning to love others.	Suggested discovery questions 1. At Mass, Catholics listen to God's word and receive the Eucharist. How might this change the way they live and treat other people? 2. What if you were chosen to help the priest during Mass, what part would you like to help with? Why? 3. What if there was never any singing or music during Mass. How do you think that might change the way people feel when they are praying?

	R3.2.2 Reflect on what Sunday Mass means for Christians.
<i>Respond</i>	Create a simple 'Mass Memory Book' where they draw or write about their favourite parts of Sunday Mass each week. Reflect on what you heard, saw and felt, and how this helps you in your daily life. Design a 'Why Mass Matters' poster. Write a short letter to Jesus after Mass, telling Him what you enjoyed, what you learned, and how you might follow His teachings during the rest of the week.

Textual references

Key vocabulary

Teacher Notes

Catholics go to Mass to worship God and remember what He has done for us.

At the beginning of Mass, Catholics gather, sing, and say sorry for their sins. Some people and the priest read from the Lectionary, and the priest teaches us about God's messages in it.

People offer gifts of bread and wine to the priest who in turn offers them to God at the altar. The priest calls upon the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. This is called transubstantiation. Transubstantiation is a belief which makes Catholics different from many other Christians. The Body and Blood of Jesus Christ are called the Eucharist. To receive this regularly is the most important thing a Catholic can do.

At the end of Mass, the priest blesses everyone and sends them out to love and help others.

In conversation with your parish priest, ask if it is possible to participate in a 'teaching Mass' at church or in the classroom, so that he can explain certain parts to the pupils including prayers, signs and actions.

Recommended supplementary teaching resources for the Mass:

- [Welcome to The Mass Poster Book](#)
- [Order of the Mass Floor Puzzle](#)



Prophecy and Promise

Year 3

Week 3

Believe & Celebrate

	U3.2.3 Give simple descriptions of some special prayers, signs, and actions performed in church and at Mass using religious language, focusing on the Liturgy of the Word.
<i>Know</i>	Catholics listen to readings from the Bible, including the Old Testament, letters from the Apostles, and the Gospel, to hear God's message. The people respond with prayers like 'Thanks be to God' and show respect by standing or making the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart before the Gospel. The priest explains the readings in a homily so Catholics can understand God's message and think about how to live it in their daily lives.

	D3.2.2 Consider how Catholics use some prayers, signs, actions, and symbols during Mass and make links between beliefs and action.
<i>Discern</i>	We stand to hear the Gospel because Jesus' words are very special. We kneel to show respect for God during the most sacred times in Mass. Suggested discovery questions 1. Why do you think Catholics stand to hear the Gospel? Do you think standing helps people show respect, or could it mean something different? 2. Some people might think sitting quietly is enough to show respect for God. Do you agree or disagree, and why? 3. If you were at Mass, how would standing or kneeling make you feel closer to God? Can you think of times when you show respect in other ways, and why those are important?

	Attend Mass and listen attentively to the scripture readings. Focus on the key teachings and create an action plan for the class on how you can put what you've learnt about the faith this week into action. Interview a parishioner (e.g. headteacher, other staff member or a visitor) about their favourite parts of Mass and why it is important to them and how standing, sitting, and kneeling help them to participate in it. Compare this to your own thoughts and feelings.
<i>Respond</i>	

Textual references

Key vocabulary

Gospel	the books of the Bible that tell the story of Jesus' life and teachings
homily	a short talk, given by a priest or deacon, to help people understand God's message and how to live it

Teacher Notes

The Liturgy of the Word

During the Liturgy of the Word, Catholics listen to Bible readings that teach about God. The First Reading is usually from the Old Testament, and it connects to the Gospel. During Easter, the reading comes from Acts of the Apostles. The Responsorial Psalm is a response to the First Reading and can be read or sung. On Sundays and special feast days, a Second Reading comes from the letters of the Apostles or the Book of Revelation. After each reading, the reader says, 'The Word of the Lord,' and the people respond, 'Thanks be to God'.

Before the Gospel, Catholics make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart to show they want to think about, speak, and love God's word. The Gospel tells us about something special Jesus said or did. Catholics stand to listen to the Gospel at Mass as a sign of respect and to show they are ready to hear God's Word and follow Jesus. After the Gospel reading, the priest gives a short talk (homily) to help people understand God's message and how to live it.

Signs, actions, and symbols in Mass

The Sign of the Cross helps you remember you belong to God.

Standing can help people show respect and honour God. Some people might also stand to feel more involved or to be ready to follow Jesus' teachings. It could mean being alert and listening carefully, not just a physical action.

The Consecration is so important because it is the moment when the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus. Catholics believe that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist, just as He was at the Last Supper. We show respect at this moment by kneeling in prayer, staying silent, and looking at the host and chalice with reverence. Some people bow their heads or say a quiet prayer in their hearts to thank Jesus for His sacrifice.

Jesus gives us His peace which we pass on to each other in the Sign of Peace.

The tabernacle is God's physical dwelling place on earth. To bend your knee before God when entering a church, is a holistic sign of reverence.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 3

Week 4
Hear & Celebrate



U3.2.6

Recall that angels bring God's message in the gospels of St Matthew and St Luke.

Know

Angels are messengers from God who bring important messages about Jesus' birth to Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds.

In Matthew's Gospel, an angel visits Joseph in a dream to tell him to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt to keep them safe from King Herod.

In Luke's Gospel, the Angel Gabriel visits Mary to announce that she will have a special baby, Jesus, and angels later tell the shepherds about His birth.



Discern

Mary's Magnificat shows that she trusts God, praises Him for His love, and cares about people who are poor or in need.

Suggested discovery questions

1. What if you trusted God like Mary does, even when things feel difficult? How might it change the way you feel or act?
2. What if you tried to praise God every day, like Mary does in the Magnificat? How could this help you and the people around you?
3. What if you looked for ways to help people who are poor or in need, following Mary's example? What could happen for them, and what might you learn or feel?



Respond

Consider which of the *Catholic School Pupil Profile* virtues were demonstrated by Mary and Joseph.

Create greetings cards for people in your local community spreading the joy of the angels' messages.

Textual references

Matthew 1:18-25 & 2:13-23	The Annunciation (Matthean version) & warning to keep the Baby Jesus safe from Herod
Luke 1:26-38	The Annunciation (Lucan version)
Luke 1:46-55	The Magnificat

Key vocabulary

Teacher Notes

The Annunciation accounts

This is the first time pupils have encountered Matthew's account of the Angel Gabriel's annunciation to Mary.

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke both tell the story of Jesus' birth, but they focus on different people and angels. In Matthew, the angel visits Joseph in dreams. The angel's second message is practical: Joseph must take Mary and Jesus to Egypt to keep them safe from King Herod. This shows that angels help people understand God's plan and guide them to act wisely.

In Luke (1:26–38), the Angel Gabriel visits Mary to announce that she will have a baby, Jesus, who is God's Son. Gabriel's message is joyful and full of wonder. Later in Luke, angels also appear to the shepherds to share the good news of Jesus' birth, highlighting that God's message is for everyone, not just important adults.

The differences between the two accounts help Christians see different aspects of God's plan. Matthew emphasises protection and obedience, showing God guiding Joseph to keep His Son safe. Luke emphasises God's love, joy, and inclusion, showing that Jesus comes for all people.

Teachers can help pupils understand that these differences do not mean one story is wrong. The writers focus on different details to help readers learn different lessons: angels bring God's messages, people listen and respond, and Jesus' birth is full of God's love and care.

Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat

The Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) is Mary's song of praise to God, spoken when she visits her cousin Elizabeth after the Annunciation. It reflects three key qualities that make Mary a model for Christians:

1. First, Mary shows trust in God. She accepts God's plan to be the mother of Jesus, even though it is surprising and challenging (Luke 1:38). Her faith demonstrates courage and obedience, showing pupils how trust in God can guide actions in difficult situations.
2. Second, Mary praises God for His love and mercy. She celebrates God's goodness, remembering how He acts for the poor, the humble, and the oppressed (Luke 1:50–53). Teachers can help pupils see that praise is not only saying 'thank you' but recognising God's care in the world.
3. Third, Mary cares about people who are poor or in need. Her words highlight God's justice and compassion, showing that following Him involves concern for others. Pupils can explore practical ways to show care in daily life.

Mary's Magnificat therefore links prayer, faith, and action, offering a model of Christian living grounded in trust, gratitude, and love for others.

[A sung Magnificat](#) by CJM Music



Prophecy and Promise

Year 3

Week 5

Hear, Believe & Celebrate

	U3.2.4 Recognise how Joseph puts his trust in God when the angel appears.
<i>Know</i>	Joseph listens to the angel in a dream and trusts God's message about Mary and the baby Jesus. Joseph trusts God by taking Mary as his wife, even though the news is surprising and unusual. Joseph protects Mary and Jesus by going to Egypt, showing he follows God's plan and keeps them safe.

	D3.2.3 Talk, ask, and answer questions about Joseph and Mary trusting in God.
<i>Discern</i>	Joseph and Mary trust in God because they have faith in Him and believe He had a good plan for them. Suggested discovery questions 1. What do you think it means to trust God like Joseph and Mary do? Why is this important? 2. How do you think Joseph feels when he puts his trust in the angel? 3. Why you think Joseph and Mary open their hearts and trust God so much, even though they do not understand His plan at this stage?

	R3.2.1 Respond creatively to the words of an Advent hymn, work of art, prayer, or poem that connects to the message of the angels.
<i>Respond</i>	Sing and reflect on the lyrics of Advent hymns that emphasise the theme of trusting in God's plan for the world (e.g. Long Ago Prophets Knew; O Come, Divine Messiah; O Come, O Come, Emmanuel). Write your own poem or hymn of trust about God's plan to send us the Light of the World at Christmastime.

Textual references

Matthew 1:18-25

The Annunciation (Matthean version)

Key vocabulary

Teacher Notes

Matthew 1:18-25 tells us that St Joseph was going to divorce Mary quietly after he learned that she was pregnant. But an angel of the Lord appeared to St Joseph in a dream, telling him to not be afraid, that Mary would give birth to the Saviour: Jesus Christ. God was entrusting Joseph with His greatest treasures: Mary and the Baby Jesus.

St Joseph's faithfulness to God's will helped bring our Saviour into the world. The image of St Joseph as he's sleeping is a powerful reminder of his peaceful surrender to God's plan for his life.

Pope Francis owned a Sleeping St Joseph statue for several years and brought it with him from Argentina to the Vatican when he became pope. He explained that whenever he has a problem or special prayer, he writes it down and places it underneath the Sleeping St Joseph. St Joseph takes care of the intention while the pope rested.

In class prayer time, any intentions of the pupils could also be given to the intercession of St Joseph using a statue or image of Sleeping St Joseph.

Hymn: Long Ago Prophets Knew

This hymn reminds Christians that prophets in the Old Testament spoke about God's plan long before Jesus was born. The lyrics encourage believers to trust God's promises, just as the prophets did. Singing this hymn helps pupils reflect on how God prepares the world for His Son and how people, like Mary and Joseph, trust Him even when His plan is surprising or hard to understand. Teachers can highlight the idea that trusting God means believing He is always guiding people and keeping His promises. Pupils can discuss examples of trusting God in their own lives.

Hymn: O Come, Divine Messiah

This hymn focuses on longing and hope for God's salvation. It reflects the Jewish people's hope for the Messiah and helps Christians today remember to trust God's timing and plan. Singing the hymn allows pupils to reflect on the world waiting for Jesus and how God's plan unfolds in His time. Teachers can connect the lyrics to the Annunciation and Isaiah's prophecies, showing that God's plan is full of love, care, and purpose. Pupils can discuss what it means to wait and trust God in their own experiences.

Hymn: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

This hymn emphasises hope, trust, and preparation for Jesus' coming. 'Emmanuel' means 'God with us', reminding Christians that God keeps His promises. Singing and reflecting on this hymn helps pupils connect the Advent season to trusting God's plan, just as Mary, Joseph, and the prophets did. Teachers can highlight how the verses speak of waiting, longing, and hope, and encourage pupils to think about ways they can trust God in their own lives. Pupils can identify words and phrases that show faith and hope.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 3

Week 6

Hear, Believe & Live



U3.2.5

Make links between the angel's message about Jesus and the words of the prophet Isaiah.

Know

In the Old Testament, Isaiah says that God will send a special baby called Immanuel, which means 'God with us.'

In the New Testament, the Angel Gabriel tells Mary that her baby will be called Jesus and that He is the Son of God, just as Isaiah had prophesied.

Isaiah's prophecy and the Angel Gabriel's annunciation tell us that Jesus is the one God promises to help and save us.



D3.2.4

Compare and make simple links between the signs used in Advent and Christmas and their meaning for Christians

Discern

The signs used in Advent and Christmas, like candles, the Advent wreath, and the story of Jesus' birth, help Christians remember God's promises, His love, and the coming of Jesus.

Suggested discovery questions

1. Why do you think Christians use candles and an Advent wreath to get ready for Jesus' birth? How does this help people remember God's promises?
2. Some people might only see Christmas as presents and parties. How do the signs of Advent and Christmas help Christians remember God's love and the coming of Jesus?
3. Can you think of a sign you see at home, at church, or in your community during Advent or Christmas that reminds you of God being with us? Why do you think it is important?



Respond

Use praying in colour or guided meditation to explore what 'Immanuel' means for you.

Use artistic representations of 'Immanuel' and 'Light of the World' to reflect on God's promise being fulfilled.

Textual references

Isaiah 7:14	Isaiah tells people that God will send a Saviour, Jesus
Luke 1:26-38	The Annunciation (Lucan version)

Key vocabulary

Immanuel 'God with us'

Teacher Notes

Links between Isaiah's prophecy and the Annunciation

1. Isaiah 7:14 prophesies that a young woman will give birth to a child called Immanuel, meaning 'God with us'. Luke shows this prophecy being fulfilled when the Angel Gabriel tells Mary she will have Jesus.
2. Isaiah speaks of a young woman chosen by God. In Luke, Mary is a humble young woman who is chosen to be the mother of Jesus, highlighting God's plan and her unique role.
3. Both passages emphasise God's action. Isaiah's prophecy shows God promises to act for His people. In Luke, God sends an angel to announce His plan to Mary, showing that God initiates and guides His plan of salvation.
4. 'Immanuel' means 'God with us'. Luke's account makes this real in Jesus, showing God coming into the world through Mary.

Connecting Isaiah, the Annunciation, Advent, and Christmas

Isaiah 7:14 prophesies that a young woman will give birth to a child called Immanuel, meaning 'God with us'. This prophecy points to God's plan to come into the world through a special child. In Luke 1:26–38, the Angel Gabriel visits Mary in Nazareth to announce that she will be the mother of Jesus. Mary's 'yes' fulfils Isaiah's prophecy and shows her trust in God. This is the Annunciation, a moment that highlights God's initiative and the beginning of salvation.

The signs of Advent and Christmas help Christians connect with this story and its meaning. The Advent wreath with its candles reminds Christians of hope, preparation, and God's light coming into the world. Each candle represents a step towards Jesus' birth, echoing Mary's journey of trust. The Nativity scene and the Christmas decorations are visual reminders of God's promise and His presence among people.

By linking Isaiah's prophecy with the Annunciation and these Advent/Christmas signs, teachers can show pupils how Christians use symbols to remember God's plan, His love, and the coming of Jesus. These signs are not just decoration; they are meaningful tools that help believers reflect, prepare, and rejoice in the fulfilment of God's promises.

Artworks on Immanuel and Light of the World

1. [Immanuel by Yongsung Kim](#) (South Korea, 2025)
This contemporary painting captures the intimate moment of Mary and Joseph gazing upon the newborn Jesus, symbolising 'Immanuel', meaning 'God with us'. The soft lighting and serene expressions invite pupils to reflect on the fulfilment of God's promise to be present with His people. Discussing this artwork can help children understand the significance of Jesus' birth and how it represents God's love and presence in the world. Encourage pupils to express what feelings or thoughts arise when they look at the painting and relate it to the Advent theme of anticipation and hope.
2. [The Light of the World by William Holman Hunt](#) (UK, 1851-54)
This iconic painting depicts Jesus standing at a closed door, holding a lantern, symbolising His role as the 'Light of the World'. The absence of a handle on the door suggests that it must be opened from the inside, representing the choice to welcome Jesus into one's life. Sharing this artwork with pupils can prompt discussions about Jesus bringing light into the world and into their own hearts. Reflecting on this image can help children connect the Advent theme of waiting for Jesus with the idea of inviting His light into their lives.

Suggested resources for guided meditations:

[Praying in Colour](#)

[A Year of Mindfulness: Guided Meditations for Christian Schools](#) (use meditation 2.8, *Christmas Meditation*)

Whilst decorating the Christmas tree in class, add a star or angel to the top to remind children of the significance of the Nativity account.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 4

Week 1

Celebrate & Live

	U4.2.5 Know that the feast of Christ the King marks the end of the Church's year and describe what is celebrated.
Know	The Feast of Christ the King is celebrated on the last Sunday of the Church's year, just before Advent begins. This feast honours Jesus as King of heaven, who rules with love, justice, truth, and peace; not like an earthly king. Catholics celebrate by praying, singing special hymns, and remembering that Jesus is Lord over all creation, even when the world turns away from God.

	D4.2.3 Respond to a variety of artistic ways in Christ the King portrayed. Suggest reasons for the artist's choices, give reasons for their personal preference and compare their ideas with others. D4.2.2 Talk about the type of king they think Jesus would be and give reasons for their answers.
Discern	Christ the King provides what the world cannot give. He shows us the best way to live our lives. Suggested discovery questions 1. Looking at different artworks of Christ the King, what do you notice about how He is shown? Why do you think the artist chose to show Him that way? 2. Which picture of Christ the King do you like the most, and why? How does it help you understand the way He shows us how to live? 3. How does looking at pictures of Christ the King help you understand the things He gives us that the world cannot, like love, hope, and guidance? How might following His example change the way you live?

	R4.2.2
Respond	Consider who you see as being a good leader/role model. What attributes do they have? Reflecting upon the Catholic School Pupil Profile, what virtues do your leaders/role models demonstrate? How could you lead on a project or initiative that means a lot to you? What leadership skills do you see in others and yourself?

Textual references

Teacher Notes

Suggested artworks

[*Christ the King* by CB Chambers](#) (United States, mid-20th century)

This artwork depicts Christ in red and white robes, wearing a royal crown over a crown of thorns, symbolising His kingship and sacrifice. His glowing Sacred Heart and raised right hand in blessing convey His divine love and authority. The globe in His left hand signifies His reign over the world. Discussing this image can help children understand the concept of Jesus as a king who serves others and leads with love.

[*Christ the King* by Joan Cole](#) (United Kingdom, 21st century)

In this icon-style painting, Christ is portrayed with a golden halo and a crown, holding a book and making a blessing gesture. The rich colours and traditional style reflect the sacredness of the subject. This artwork can prompt discussions about the symbolism of crowns and books in representing authority and wisdom. Children can explore how different artistic styles convey the same message of Christ's kingship.

There are also stained glass pieces in some of our diocesan churches:



Christ the King, Kingstanding (Birmingham)



Christ the King, Coundon (Coventry)



Prophecy and Promise

Year 4

Week 2

Hear & Celebrate

	U4.2.6 Make links with the ancestry of Jesus and the Jesse tree.
<i>Know</i>	Jesus is born into the human family of Mary and Joseph, and His ancestors are remembered in the Jesse Tree. The Jesse Tree shows people and events from Jesus' family, linking to prophecies like Isaiah 11:1, and shows He is the fulfilment of God's promises. Matthew traces Jesus' family back to Abraham, and Luke traces it to Adam, helping Christians understand that Jesus comes to save all people and that God planned His birth from the beginning.

	D4.2.1 Respond to a variety of artistic ways in which the Jesse tree is portrayed. Suggest reasons for the artist's choices and give reasons for their personal preference.	
<i>Discern</i>	Portraying the Jesse Tree through art is important because it helps us see and remember Jesus' family story in a beautiful and creative way, making His role in the world's history clear.	Suggested discovery questions 1. Why is it important to identify Jesus' ancestors? 2. Why do you think the artist chooses certain people or symbols to show on the Jesse Tree? What story are they trying to tell about Jesus? 3. If you made your own Jesse Tree, what would you include to show Jesus' story? How might your choices help others understand Him?

	Create your own version of the Jesse Tree with symbols associated with Jesus' ancestors.
<i>Respond</i>	Pick a person from the Jesse Tree. What can you do to follow this person's example?

Textual references

Isaiah 11:1

The righteous reign of the branch

Matthew 1:1-17

Genealogy of Jesus Christ (*N.B. only a flavour of this text needs to be given; pupils do not need to study the genealogy in great detail*)

Key vocabulary

Jesse Tree the family tree (genealogy) of Jesus

Teacher Notes

See Jesse Tree resource suggestions on the following websites:

- [Catholic Icing](#)
- [Look To Him and Be Radiant](#)
- [Mission Together](#)

The Jesse Tree is a visual way to explore the ancestry of Jesus, linking the Old Testament to His birth in the New Testament. Its name comes from Jesse, the father of King David, because Jesus is descended from David. The tree often begins with a representation of Jesse at the base, symbolising the roots of God's promise, as foretold in Isaiah 11:1, 'A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.'

Ornaments placed on the tree represent key figures or events in salvation history. For example:

- **Abraham** is included because God made a covenant with him, promising that all nations would be blessed through his descendants (Genesis 12:1-3)
- **Sarah**, Abraham's wife, showing God's promise of a child and faith in His plan (Genesis 17:15-19, 21:1-7)
- **David** is important as the king from whose line Jesus comes, fulfilling God's promise of a ruler for Israel (2 Samuel 7:12-16)
- **Noah** may be represented to show God's care for humanity and the promise of new beginnings (Genesis 9:8-17)
- Prophets like **Isaiah** remind Christians that God foretold the coming of the Messiah (Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7)
- **Mary** and **Joseph** appear near the top, connecting the tree to the immediate family of Jesus and the fulfilment of God's plan in history (Luke 1:26-38, Matthew 1:18-25)
- **Isaac** as the child of promise, linking God's covenant to Abraham's descendants (Genesis 22:1-14)
- **Jacob** as the father of the twelve tribes of Israel, showing God's guidance in family history (Genesis 28:10-22)
- **Ruth** represents loyalty and God working through unexpected people (Ruth 1:16-17, 2:1-12)
- **Samuel**, the prophet who anointed David, highlighting God's guidance and choice (1 Samuel 3:1-21)
- **Elijah**, the prophet symbolising God's call to repentance and faithfulness (1 Kings 17:1-16, 19:1-18)



Prophecy and Promise

Year 4

Week 3
Hear & Believe



U4.2.1

Describe what a prophet is, drawing on Elijah and John the Baptist as examples.

Know

A prophet listens to God and shares His message to help people follow Him, sometimes predicting future events.

Elijah trusts God and helps others trust Him too, showing God provides in times of need and sometimes speaks quietly to guide us.

John the Baptist prepares people for Jesus by calling them to change, be baptised, and recognise that Jesus is greater than anyone else.



Discern

Without Elijah and John the Baptist, maybe people would not believe in Jesus as easily, and they would not know how to follow God.

Suggested discovery questions

1. What might have happened if Elijah had not called the people to trust God or shown God's power through miracles? How could this have affected their faith?
2. How do you think people's understanding of Jesus would change if John the Baptist had not told them to prepare for Him? What difference would that make for believing in God?
3. If you were living at the time of Elijah or John the Baptist, how might their words and actions influence the choices you make about following God?



R4.2.1

Reflect on how Elijah and John the Baptist's words speak to people today.

Respond

What message would you give the people of today about Jesus?

How might the world be transformed today if everyone listens to the words of Elijah and John the Baptist?

How can trusting God help you face challenges?

Textual references

For Elijah

1 Kings 17:7-14

1 Kings 19:4-8

1 Kings 19:9-15

God provides for a widow and her son

An angel gives Elijah strength

God speaks in a gentle whisper

For John the Baptist

Matthew 3:1-12

Mark 1:1-18

Prepare a way for Jesus

John baptises and points to the Messiah

Key vocabulary

baptise	to pour or immerse in water as a sign of turning back to God
covenant	a sacred promise between God and His people
prophet	someone chosen by God to speak His message and guide others

Teacher Notes

Elijah

Elijah is one of the most important prophets in the Old Testament. He calls the people of Israel to return to God when they have turned away to false gods. His story shows that prophets not only speak God's message but also rely on God's care and guidance. For example, during a famine, God provides flour and oil for a widow and her son through Elijah's faithfulness (1 Kings 17:7–14). Later, when Elijah feels sad and alone, God strengthens him through an angel and speaks to him in a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:4–15). This teaches pupils that God communicates in different ways, sometimes quietly, and provides for those who trust Him. Elijah models courage, obedience, and trust in God, showing that prophets help people remain faithful and guide them back to God's path.

John the Baptist

John the Baptist is the prophet who prepares the way for Jesus in the New Testament. He calls people to change their lives, repent from sin, and be baptised in preparation for the coming of the Messiah (Matthew 3:1–12). John emphasises that he baptises with water, but Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit, showing that Jesus is greater than anyone else. John's role highlights that prophets help people recognise God's plan and prepare for salvation. Teachers can help pupils see that John demonstrates courage, humility, and faithfulness, and that he points others towards Jesus, making him a key link between God's promises in the Old Testament and their fulfilment in the New.

The week's lessons help pupils appreciate that prophets challenge, encourage and guide God's people. Their words demand response: change of heart, renewed faith and readiness to follow God even when it is difficult.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 4

Week 4
Hear & Believe



U4.2.2

Show some understanding of the cultural and religious context of Elijah's time and why people needed to be reminded of God's covenant.

Know

God makes a covenant with Israel, promising to bless them if they follow Him, but during Elijah's time many, encouraged by King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, turn to worship Baal.

Elijah performs miracles, like making a widow's flour and oil last, showing that God cares for His people when they trust Him.

Even when Elijah feels scared and alone, God provides strength, food, and speaks in a quiet whisper, reminding him that God keeps His covenant and guides those who are faithful.



Discern

God is patient and good. He always keeps His word, even when people make mistakes.

Suggested discovery questions

1. Why do you think God continues to help and guide Elijah even when the people of Israel turn away from Him?
2. How does God showing patience and providing for Elijah help us understand the kind of God He is?
3. What can we learn about keeping God's promises from the way He cares for Elijah and reminds the people of Israel about His covenant?



Respond

What are the most important things in your life? How important is following God's ways for your life? Think of things that can distract you from the most important things in your life. What could you do to prevent yourself being distracted?

Create a short journal entry reflecting on promises God makes and how you can trust Him in your own life. Write or draw one action you could take this week to follow God's ways.

Textual references

1 Kings 17:7-14
1 Kings 19:4-8
1 Kings 19:9-15

God provides for a widow and her son
God gives Elijah strength in the desert
God speaks in a gentle whisper

Key vocabulary

Baal	a false god worshipped by some people in Elijah's time
idolatory	putting something or someone in God's place
whisper	a soft, quiet sound that teaches Elijah to notice God's gentle guidance

Teacher Notes

Cultural and religious context

During Elijah's time, Israel faces a difficult period under King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, who promote the worship of Baal, a Canaanite god associated with rain and fertility. They want to hurt Elijah because he speaks out against their false god. Many people turn away from the worship of the Lord, the one true God, breaking the covenant God made with Israel: that He would bless them if they followed His ways. In response, God allows a long drought to show that He is the true source of life and to call the people back to faithfulness. However, the people do not always listen to Elijah.

Elijah's actions demonstrate God's care and power. In 1 Kings 17:7–14, God provides for a widow and her son by making a small amount of flour and oil last, showing that trusting God brings provision even in times of scarcity. Later, in 1 Kings 19:4–8, Elijah flees into the desert feeling scared and alone, yet God sends an angel to give him food and strength, reminding pupils that God supports His faithful followers even in difficult times.

Finally, in 1 Kings 19:9–15, God speaks to Elijah in a gentle whisper rather than through dramatic displays of wind, earthquake, or fire. This quiet voice reveals that God's guidance is often subtle and patient, encouraging reflection and obedience.

Teaching pupils about this cultural and religious context helps them understand why the people of Israel needed prophets like Elijah to remind them of God's covenant and His care. It also shows that God acts through ordinary people to guide and protect His followers, illustrating faith, obedience, and trust.

Elijah and God's faithfulness: learning from the covenant

Elijah's story helps pupils see that God honours His promises, even when people make mistakes. The Israelites sometimes forget God because they are influenced by other leaders and idols, so God sends prophets like Elijah to guide them back. This shows that keeping a covenant is not just about rules but about trusting and relying on God.

God's care for Elijah demonstrates that He actively supports those who follow Him. When Elijah is in danger or feels discouraged, God provides food, rest, and reassurance. These actions remind pupils that God's promises are dependable, and that His plan continues even if people falter.

The gentle whisper God uses to speak to Elijah illustrates that God communicates in patient and unexpected ways. Teachers can emphasise that God's covenant includes His guidance, protection, and encouragement, not just blessings. Discussing these passages helps pupils understand that trusting God, listening to His guidance, and responding faithfully are key ways humans participate in God's promises.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 4

Week 5
Hear & Believe



U4.2.3

Compare the description of John the Baptist in Matthew and Mark's accounts and describe the beliefs about John the Baptist the gospel writers show.

Know

Both Matthew and Mark show John the Baptist as a messenger sent to prepare the way for Jesus, fulfilling God's plan.

Matthew emphasises John calling people to repent and live truly good lives, especially challenging religious leaders, and teaching that Jesus will bring judgement and salvation.

Mark highlights John as a fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, living simply in the wilderness, and preparing people for someone greater than himself, Jesus.



Discern

Sometimes when different people retell an event, they focus on different details to emphasise a special message.

Suggested discovery questions

1. Why do you think Matthew and Mark tell the story of John the Baptist in slightly different ways? Which details do they each choose to focus on and why might that be?
2. If you were telling the story of John the Baptist, what parts would you emphasise and why? How might that change what people understand about him?
3. Do you think one version of the story is more important or true than the other, or do both help people understand John's role in God's plan? Why?



Respond

What characteristics does John the Baptist show that we can adopt in our own lives? For example: standing up for what is right, humility and living simply.

Write or draw a modern version of John the Baptist's message. What would he say if he came to your town today?

Textual references

Matthew 3:1-12

John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus

Mark 1:1-8

John the Baptist points to someone greater

Key vocabulary

fulfilment	when something promised by God comes true
repent	to turn away from wrong and choose God's ways
wilderness	a wild, lonely place where John lived and preached

Teacher Notes

Matthew & Mark: two different emphases

John the Baptist is one of the most significant prophets in the New Testament, bridging the Old and New Testaments. Both Matthew and Mark describe him as a messenger sent to prepare the way for Jesus, showing that he plays a vital role in God's plan for salvation.

Mark emphasises that John fulfils Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 40:3) as 'a voice crying in the wilderness,' calling people to recognise God's plan and prepare their hearts.

Matthew focuses more on John's moral teaching. He calls people to repent, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is coming' (Matthew 3:2). John challenges everyone, including the religious leaders, to stop pretending to be righteous and truly turn to God. He warns that Jesus, who is coming soon, will separate the good from the bad. This teaching shows John's role in helping people understand the seriousness of God's covenant and the coming of the Messiah.

Both Gospels describe John's simple lifestyle of wearing camel's hair and eating locusts and honey, which underlines his detachment from material things and total focus on God's mission. Mark particularly highlights that John is preparing people for someone greater than himself, pointing to Jesus' unique role as Saviour.

Teachers can help pupils understand that the differences in the Gospel accounts reflect the evangelists' emphases: Matthew highlights repentance and moral readiness, while Mark stresses prophetic fulfilment and preparation for the Messiah. Together, the passages show John as a model of courage, faithfulness, and obedience to God, whose life points directly to Jesus.

John wants people to change

John the Baptist's main message is one of repentance, which means turning away from wrongdoing and changing one's life to follow God more closely. In Matthew 3:1–12, he tells people to 'repent, for the kingdom of heaven is coming,' challenging them to stop pretending to be good and to act with honesty, justice, and kindness.

John points to Jesus as someone greater than himself. Jesus is special because He is the Messiah, the Son of God, who will bring salvation, forgive sins, and make God's kingdom fully present. John's call to change is linked to the arrival of Jesus: by preparing their hearts and actions, people can recognise and follow God's plan. Teachers can emphasise that John's courage and honesty inspire pupils to reflect on their own choices and to live in ways that welcome God's love and guidance.

The song *Prepare Ye* from the musical *Godspell* echoes the words of John the Baptist to prepare a way for the Lord.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 4

Week 6

Believe & Live



U4.2.4

Make links with the words of Isaiah, the preaching of John the Baptist, and the season of Advent.

Know

Isaiah and John the Baptist call people to get their hearts ready for Jesus, preparing them to recognise Him and follow God.

Advent is a time to prepare for Jesus' birth and to reflect on how we live, seeking forgiveness and trying to make good choices.

During Advent, especially on the second and third Sundays, we hear John the Baptist's message, linking his preaching to Isaiah's prophecy and the season of preparation.



Discern

Advent is a good time to remember the message of Isaiah and John the Baptist to prepare a way for the Lord in our lives.

Suggested discovery questions

1. Why do you think Isaiah and John the Baptist remind people to get ready for God? How might following their advice change the way we live today?
2. Do you think preparing a way for the Lord is the same for everyone, or could different people do it in different ways? Why?
3. If you were thinking about Advent, what could you do to make your own life ready for God? How might that help other people around you?



Respond

Look at a painting or stained-glass window of John the Baptist preaching. What do you notice about how he is shown? Design your own image of John the Baptist or Elijah, linked to the season of Advent. Think about the messages you want to communicate.

Consider practical ways in which Christians can prepare for Christ's birthday at Christmas and to prepare for his second coming at an unknown time. What can you do during the season of Advent?

Textual references

Isaiah 40:3

Matthew 3:1-12

Mark 1:1-8

a voice prepares the way

John calls people to change

John points to someone greater

Key vocabulary

Advent	season of preparation for Jesus' coming
prophecy	message from God about His plan, often spoken by a prophet
salvation	the freedom and new life God offers through Jesus

Teacher Notes

Advent and God's call to prepare

Advent is a season that helps Christians understand God's unfolding plan in history. It is a time to reflect on how God's promises are revealed and to prepare spiritually for the coming of Christ. The Church encourages pupils to see Advent as more than decorations or presents—it is a period for inner reflection, awareness of God's work in the world, and practical ways to live faithfully.

Isaiah 40:3 introduces the image of a voice calling in the wilderness, a symbolic message that people need to make space in their lives for God. This prepares them to recognise God's actions in the world. John the Baptist, appearing in Matthew 3:1–12 and Mark 1:1–8, brings this prophecy to life. His preaching calls for a change of heart, moral awareness, and readiness to receive God's salvation.

Teachers can help pupils understand that Advent links this historical call to their own lives. Reflection on how they treat others, how they can forgive, and how they respond to God's guidance mirrors the preparation Isaiah and John encouraged. By highlighting these spiritual practices, pupils can see Advent as a time of transformation, hope, and active engagement with God's plan, connecting scripture with lived experience.

John the Baptist in the Wilderness by Caravaggio (1604, Italy)

- John is alone in the wilderness, showing he prepared himself by focussing on God before preparing others to receive Jesus.
- Dramatic use of light and dark contrast draws attention to John as a messenger of God's light in a dark world.
- John is wearing simple clothes, showing his devotion to God – reminding us that he preached about repentance and turning back to God.
- John's face shows him being reflective, showing his mission was deeply spiritual – he wasn't just baptising people, but preparing people's hearts for the coming of Jesus.



U5.2.5

Know that the Rosary is a prayerful reflection on the life of Christ and explain what the joyful mysteries remember.

Know

The Rosary is a special prayer that helps Christians think deeply about the life of Jesus and Mary.

The Joyful Mysteries tell the story of happy moments in Jesus' early life, from the Angel visiting Mary to Jesus being found in the temple.

When people pray the Joyful Mysteries, they remember God's love shown in the Holy Family and reflect on how to live with faith, joy and trust.



Discern

The joyful mysteries help us remember and celebrate the happy moments in the lives of the holy family.

Suggested discovery questions

1. The Joyful Mysteries show that God's joy is often found in simple, everyday things: a greeting, a birth, a visit. Where do you think we can find God's joy in our everyday lives today?
2. Each Joyful Mystery is about people saying 'yes' to God in trust and love. Which person's 'yes' (Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, the shepherds, Simeon) do you think took the most courage, and why?
3. Christians pray the Joyful Mysteries to help them remember happy times with God, even when life feels difficult. How do you think remembering joyful times can give people strength when they are worried or sad?



Respond

Divide the class into five groups, each with one Joyful Mystery. Provide the Bible passage and a short commentary. Each group discusses: What does this mystery show about God's love? How might this help people today live with joy, trust or faith? Groups then share back, allowing pupils to compare experiences and viewpoints.

Place the rosary in the context of Advent as a time of waiting and preparation. The joyful mysteries remind us that Advent is about spiritual growth, anticipation and reflecting on God's gift of Jesus to the world.

Textual references

Luke 1:26-38	The Annunciation (trust)
Luke 1:39-56	The Visitation (joy)
Luke 2:1-20	The Nativity (hope)
Luke 2:22-38	The Presentation (faithfulness)
Luke 2:41-52	The Finding in the Temple (wisdom)

Key vocabulary

contemplate	to think deeply and prayerfully about God (to behold)
mystery	a special moment in Jesus' or Mary's life that teaches us something about God

Teacher Notes

The Rosary

The Rosary is a traditional Catholic prayer that invites reflection on the life of Jesus Christ and the role of Mary, his mother, in salvation history. It is structured around a set of prayers, primarily the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be, and divided into four groups of Mysteries: Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious, and Luminous. Each group contains five events, or 'mysteries', from the life of Christ and the Church. The Rosary is both vocal and meditative; as Catholics recite the prayers, they also reflect on the significance of the events.

The Joyful Mysteries focus on the incarnation and early life of Jesus, highlighting themes such as trust, obedience, and God's love. The Sorrowful Mysteries consider the suffering and death of Jesus, encouraging reflection on sacrifice and forgiveness. The Glorious Mysteries celebrate the Resurrection and the hope of eternal life. The Luminous Mysteries, added in 2002 by Pope John Paul II, focus on Christ's public ministry and the call to live in the light of God's kingdom.

From a theological perspective, the Rosary is a form of contemplative prayer. It allows believers to enter into the life of Christ, deepening their understanding of the Gospel and fostering a personal relationship with God. Mary's presence in the prayer reminds Catholics of her model of faith, discipleship, and intercession. She is not worshipped, but honoured as a guide who points to her son. Pope St John Paul II called the Rosary 'a compendium of the Gospel', saying 'It is Mary's way. Is there anyone who knows and loves Christ better than she?'

Teachers can understand the Rosary as a structured, repetitive form of prayer that combines reflection, memorisation, and meditation. It provides an example of how ritual, narrative, and symbolism work together in Catholic devotion. Even for those who do not share the faith, the Rosary illustrates the ways in which prayer can support moral reflection, provide comfort, and encourage a focus on key values such as trust, compassion, and hope.

[The Rosary in 2 minutes](#) and [Where did the Rosary come from?](#) are useful videos to further support your understanding of this Catholic prayer tradition.

The 'Yeses' of the Joyful Mysteries

The Joyful Mysteries focus on the birth and early life of Jesus and highlight moments when key figures respond to God with trust and love. The Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38) shows Mary saying 'yes' to God's plan, even though she does not know exactly what will happen. This requires deep courage and faith because she accepts a life-changing mission. Joseph also says 'yes' when the angel visits him in a dream (Matthew 1:18-25), trusting God to protect Mary and Jesus despite the social and personal challenges he faces. Elizabeth's 'yes' comes through her support of Mary during the Visitation (Luke 1:39-56), showing hospitality and encouragement guided by faith. The shepherds demonstrate courage in responding to the angelic message and going to see Jesus immediately (Luke 2:8-20), despite being ordinary people from a low social position. Simeon's 'yes' in the Temple (Luke 2:25-35) shows patience and trust in God's promise, as he waits faithfully to see the Messiah before he dies.

Teachers can guide discussion by encouraging pupils to consider what makes each response courageous: the risks, the trust required, and the love shown. Pupils can reflect on how saying 'yes' to God might appear in their own lives, connecting personal experience to the courage of these biblical figures.

N.B. It is not anticipated that each pupil will study each of the joyful mysteries in great depth. Rather, an overview of the mysteries should be provided to all pupils, with pupils looking at one of the mysteries in more depth, perhaps in small groups.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 5
Weeks 2 & 3
Hear & Believe



U5.2.1

Show an understanding of scripture passages that speak of David's life, recognising the intended audience and the historical context.

Know

Israel needs a new king because Saul disobeys God. Samuel anoints David, a young shepherd, because God sees his heart, not his appearance. The Israelites learn that God chooses faithful people for His plans.

David shows bravery and trust in God by volunteering to fight Goliath. God helps him win, teaching the Israelites that courage and faith bring victory and respect.

David is made king over all Israel, uniting the twelve tribes for the first time. The people see that God's promise to David is being fulfilled.

God promises that David's family will reign forever, a temple will be built, and He will be a father to His people. This reassures the Israelites that God keeps His promises.

David dies, and Solomon becomes king. This shows that God's covenant continues as long as His people remain faithful.

These accounts were written to help the Israelites understand how God works through David to guide His people and keep His promises, even when human leaders fail.



D5.2.2

Wonder about the imagery of shepherd used in the scripture passages studied and explore how it helps them, as readers, understand servant leadership.

Discern

David was a shepherd who became a leader by guiding, protecting, and caring for his people. God calls us to lead like shepherds too, by serving others before ourselves.

Suggested discovery questions

1. David cared for his sheep and later for his people. How could you show the same care for others in your school or community?
2. David trusted God when he faced Goliath. When might you need to trust God to help you be brave for others?
3. What is one way you could put others before yourself this week?



R5.2.1

Reflect on your understanding of David and the idea of a leader as a shepherd.

Respond

Pupils write or draw examples of times they have shown trust, courage, or care for others. They then link these actions to David's leadership as a shepherd and consider how their choices could help their school, family, or neighbourhood.

Pupils work in small groups to identify one practical way to 'shepherd' their peers or community, inspired by David's example. They outline the steps, potential challenges, and expected benefits, reflecting on how thoughtful leadership transforms lives around them.

Textual references

1 Samuel 16:1-13	Anointing of David
1 Samuel 17:1-11, 32:-54	David and Goliath
2 Samuel 5:1-5	David becomes a king
2 Samuel 7:8-15	God's covenant with David
1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-12	David's death

Key vocabulary

anoint	to pour oil as a sign that someone is chosen by God
courage	strength to do what is right, even when it is difficult
shepherd	someone who guides and protects; a biblical image for good leadership

Teacher Notes

N.B. There is a lot of biblical content to cover here; the focus of the learning over these two weeks is to learn about David's story and how he guided Israel. Teachers may wish to use the [Testament - The Bible in Animation cartoon of David & Saul](#) to help cover the content. The cartoon runs for ~27 minutes and covers the first three parts of this story.

David in the Bible

To understand David, it helps to start with the background of Israel. God had rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and brought them into the Promised Land. The people were divided into twelve tribes, each descended from one of Jacob's sons (including Joseph's two sons). For a long time, these tribes were loosely connected but often struggled with enemies and unity.

The Israelites wanted a king, so God allowed them to have one. The first king was Saul, chosen by the prophet Samuel (a prophet is someone who speaks God's message). Saul was strong, but he disobeyed God, so God rejected him as king.

God sent Samuel to anoint a new king. He chose David, the youngest son of Jesse. David was a shepherd, spending his youth caring for sheep, defending them from wild animals and guiding them safely. This role prepared him to be a leader who would protect and guide God's people in the same way. David was also a musician, skilful with the harp. His music brought peace to King Saul when he was troubled. This gift shows another side of leadership: bringing comfort, hope and joy to others.

One of David's most famous early acts was defeating Goliath, a giant Philistine warrior. While the army trembled, David trusted God and used only a sling and a stone to win. This courage showed that leadership comes not from physical strength but from faith and trust in God.

Eventually David became king and, for the first time, united all twelve tribes of Israel. He made Jerusalem the capital and turned Israel into a strong nation respected by its neighbours. His reign marked a turning point: Israel moved from weakness and division to strength and unity under God's guidance.

God then made a special promise, called the covenant with David. God promised that:

1. David's descendants would last forever.
2. His kingdom would be secure.
3. God would be like a father to His people.

This covenant gave the Israelites great hope. Christians later believe that this promise was fulfilled in Jesus, born into David's family line and seen as the eternal king.

David was not perfect, he made serious mistakes, but he always returned to God. His story shows that God values faithfulness and trust, and that true leadership is like being a shepherd: guiding, protecting and caring for others with courage, wisdom and compassion.



Use specialist vocabulary to describe and explain the nature of David's kingship in the Old Testament, with reference to the passages that speak of David's kingship and Psalm 21:1-7.

David begins as a young shepherd who shows courage, patience, and faithfulness while protecting and guiding his flock, demonstrating the qualities God values in a king.

Know

As king, David shows wisdom, fairness, and humility by uniting the tribes of Israel and establishing Jerusalem as a centre for worship.

David composes psalms to praise God and teach the people about God's love, showing that a king's role includes guiding the spiritual life of the nation.



David is different from other kings because he rules with justice to fulfil God's plan. Although he doesn't look like a king, he becomes Israel's greatest king ever!

Suggested discovery questions

1. Why do you think David's way of leading, with fairness and trust in God, made him different from other kings who relied only on strength or wealth?
2. Could someone who doesn't look like a typical king still be a good leader? Why might some people agree or disagree?
3. How does David's example show that the qualities we value in a leader can be different from what others expect?



Talk with others about their ideas about leadership, thinking about what it means to be a good shepherd today.

Pupils work in small groups to create a visual gallery of leadership qualities, inspired by David as a servant leader. They draw or write examples of bravery, justice, faithfulness, and care. Groups then present their gallery to the class, explaining why each quality is important. Pupils compare ideas and discuss which qualities are most needed in leaders today, both in school and in wider society.

Respond

Pupils role-play modern scenarios where someone has to be a 'good shepherd'; for example, a team leader, a community volunteer, or a parent caring for children. Each pupil reflects on how they would guide, protect, and support others, modelling David's leadership qualities. Afterwards, pupils discuss what was challenging and what decisions showed care, justice, or wisdom, linking these actions to faith-inspired leadership.

Textual references

Psalm 21:1-7

David praises God for victory and strength

Key vocabulary

servant leadership

when a leader puts the needs of others first, cares for them, and helps them grow, just like Jesus teaches us.

Teacher Notes

David's Kingship

David's kingship teaches that a good leader is faithful, just, brave, wise, and cares for others. God chooses David not for his size or appearance but for his heart. Teachers should encourage pupils to consider why outward appearances may not reflect inner qualities. David was the youngest son of Jesse, a simple shepherd, and was described as "ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features" (1 Samuel 16:12), yet he was smaller and younger than his brothers, making him seem an unlikely choice for king. God chose him for his heart and faithfulness rather than his size or status (1 Samuel 16:7). He listens to God, protects his people, and makes decisions that benefit everyone. Pupils can explore how justice, humility, and faithfulness are central to Christian leadership. Comparing David's approach with worldly ideas of kingship, which often emphasise wealth, strength, or status, helps pupils understand differing perspectives and why some align more closely with God's vision for leadership. These qualities show pupils what servant leadership looks like in action and how trust in God guides choices.

David unites the twelve tribes of Israel for the first time. Before him, Israel is divided, and people do not always follow God. David makes Jerusalem both the political and religious centre. He brings the Ark of the Covenant to the city, showing its importance. The Ark is a sacred chest containing the tablets of the Ten Commandments. It symbolises God's presence and law, reminding the people that God guides their lives and their leaders. Housing the Ark in Jerusalem demonstrates that worship and leadership are connected.

Catholic theology teaches that all authority is a gift from God and should be exercised in service and love, as echoed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2234-2235). David's kingship also points forward to Jesus, the eternal King. Like David, Jesus leads with virtue, cares for people, and unites them. God's promises to David, including a lasting dynasty, are fulfilled in Christ. Studying David helps pupils understand how God's plan unfolds in history and how faith, service, and moral courage can transform communities, showing that true leadership is rooted in love for God and others.

Psalm 21 and David's leadership

Psalm 21:1-7 is a royal psalm attributed to David, celebrating the king's victories and acknowledging that all success comes from God. It begins with David rejoicing in the strength God gives him, showing that a faithful king recognises his authority as derived from divine guidance rather than personal power. This aligns with 1 Samuel 16:6-7, where God chooses David for his heart, not his outward appearance or strength, emphasising inner virtues such as faithfulness, humility, and obedience.

The psalm highlights several qualities of David's kingship: trust in God, gratitude, and a commitment to justice. It portrays a king whose victories benefit the people, reinforcing the idea of servant leadership. Scholars note that royal psalms like this were intended to instruct both the king and the people, showing how a godly ruler should act in accordance with God's covenant.

It celebrates David's victories and the blessings he receives from God, showing that his kingship is rooted in divine guidance rather than human strength or appearance. Teachers can guide pupils to see that David's leadership is marked by justice, trust, and faithfulness, qualities emphasised throughout 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel. Unlike kings who rely solely on power, David listens to God and seeks to serve his people, reflecting the Catholic understanding of a servant leader.

For pupils, linking Psalm 21 to David's life helps them see that kingship in the Old Testament is not only about power or conquest, but about moral integrity, care for the community, and reliance on God. These qualities also prefigure the kingship of Christ, who rules with justice, love, and mercy.

This psalm therefore serves as a theological and ethical model for understanding leadership in the biblical context.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 5

Week 5

Hear, Believe & Live

 U5.2.2	Show an understanding of some gospel passages that present Jesus as the fulfilment of the promise to David, recognising the gospel writers are writing for Christians. Recognise links with God's covenant with Abraham.
Know	The gospels of Matthew and Luke show that Jesus is a descendant of David, fulfilling God's promise that someone from David's family would be king forever. Matthew traces Jesus' family line to Abraham, showing that God's covenant with Abraham, to bless all nations through his family, is fulfilled in Jesus. Luke emphasises that Jesus will inherit David's throne and rule forever, writing for Christians who were not Jewish, to show that God's plan includes everyone, not just the Israelites.

 D5.2.1	Play with possibilities, asking 'what if?' questions that explore why God especially values those the world overlooks.	
Discern	God uses people and families others might overlook, like David's, to carry out His plans. Jesus shows that God values the humble and faithful, fulfilling His promises to Abraham and David.	Suggested discovery questions 1. What if God had chosen a famous or powerful family instead of David's family? How might things have been different? 2. Why do you think God uses ordinary or unexpected people to carry out important plans, like His promise to Abraham and David? 3. How does knowing that Jesus comes from an ordinary family help us understand who God values and why?

 R5.2.3	Consider how their own lives and the future of the communities to which they belong could be transformed by offering their own lives in service to others, as part of their preparation during Advent.	
Respond	Pupils draw a simple map of their local community, identifying areas or groups that might benefit from acts of service (e.g. elderly neighbours, local charities, school). They suggest practical ways they could help. Teachers guide pupils to link their ideas to Advent themes of preparation, generosity, and humility, highlighting how their choices can echo God's plan for the world. Formulate a 'spiritual preparation plan' suggesting how to prepare your heart and life to help others during this season of Advent.	

Textual references

Matthew 1:1-17	Genealogy of Jesus Christ
Luke 1:32-33	The Annunciation

Key vocabulary

ancestry	a person's family line stretching back through generations
descendant	someone who comes from a particular family or ancestor
genealogy	a list or record that shows a person's family line

Teacher Notes

The genealogies

Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 1:32-33 present Jesus as the fulfilment of God's promise to David. In the Old Testament, God promises David that his descendants will rule Israel forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16). The gospels show that Jesus completes this promise, linking him to both David and Abraham. Matthew carefully traces Jesus' genealogy from Abraham through David, emphasising that God's covenant with Abraham, to bless all nations through his family, is fulfilled in Jesus. Luke also traces Jesus' lineage to David, but he writes for a Gentile audience, showing that Jesus' kingship and God's plan extend to all people, not only the Jewish people.

Catholic teaching understands these genealogies as more than historical records. They demonstrate God's faithfulness and plan through history, preparing the world for Christ. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (484) notes that Jesus is 'the fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers', showing God's covenantal faithfulness. Pupils can see that God's plan unfolds gradually, working through ordinary human families and history, culminating in Christ. God's covenant with Abraham promised that through Abraham's family, all people would be blessed, and Jesus, as a descendant of Abraham, is the way God blesses everyone by bringing salvation to the world.

When teaching, emphasise that genealogies communicate spiritual truths. God chooses people for His plan not because of status or strength, but because of their faithfulness, as with David. Pupils can reflect on how God works in their own lives, often in ways they do not expect, and how Jesus' birth is the fulfilment of centuries of God's promise. Making the connection between David, Abraham and Jesus helps pupils see continuity in God's plan, showing that the coming of Christ is the fulfilment of hope and covenant.

God chooses those the world overlooks

God chooses individuals and families who might seem unlikely from a worldly perspective. In the Old Testament, David comes from a modest family in Bethlehem, the youngest son of Jesse, and was a shepherd. 1 Samuel 16:1-13 emphasises that God selects David not for his appearance or status but for his heart, showing that God values faithfulness, humility, and trust. God's choice of David and his lineage sets the stage for the coming of the Messiah, fulfilling the covenant promises made to Abraham that his descendants would bless all nations (Genesis 12:1-3).

In the New Testament, Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 1:32-33 show that Jesus is a descendant of David. These genealogies are carefully written for Christian audiences to highlight that God's plan has been unfolding through history and that Jesus fulfils the promises made to both Abraham and David. Jesus' birth into a humble family demonstrates that God often works through the lowly and overlooked, rather than through worldly power or status.

Teachers can emphasise that God's choices overturn worldly expectations, showing that what matters to God (faithfulness, obedience, and love) is not always obvious from the outside. Pupils can reflect on how God values the humble and faithful in their own lives, linking scripture with Catholic teaching on God's providence and the unfolding of salvation history. This provides a foundation for discussing how God continues to work through ordinary people today.

Linking David to Advent

During Advent, Catholics prepare for the coming of Christ by reflecting on how God works through ordinary people and families, like David's, to fulfil His plan. Just as David's humility, faithfulness, and trust in God allowed him to become a key figure in salvation history, pupils can see that God values qualities of heart over worldly status. Advent encourages spiritual preparation through prayer, reflection, and actions that mirror these virtues.

Teachers can guide pupils to understand that being a servant leader means caring for others, acting justly, and using their gifts to support their communities, just as David cared for Israel and shepherded his people. Pupils can identify small, practical ways to embody these qualities, such as helping others, showing kindness, or standing up for fairness, thereby transforming the lives of those around them.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 5

Week 6

Hear, Believe & Celebrate

	U5.2.4 Recognise that David is a model of prayer, referencing one of the psalms.
<i>Know</i>	Through his psalms, David models different types of prayer, including praise, thanks, and trust, helping Christians understand how to pray in their own lives. David prays to God to thank Him for His help, protection, and blessings, showing that prayer is a way to stay close to God (Psalm 21:1-7) David describes God as a shepherd who guides, protects, and cares for His people, teaching that trusting God is an important part of prayer (Psalm 23)

	D5.2.3 Explore artistic representations of the O Antiphons, describe what they represent, and say which they prefer, giving reasons for their choice.	
<i>Discern</i>	Jesus opens the way to God the Father	Suggested discovery questions, after comparing some artistic representations of 'O Clavis David' 1. What do you think these artworks communicate about Jesus? 2. Are they effective? 3. Why or why not?

	Create your own artistic representation of 'O Key of David'.
<i>Respond</i>	The hymn 'O Come, O Come Emmanuel' sets the O antiphons into an Advent carol. Read the text of the verses of this hymn and explore how successfully they express beliefs about who Jesus is. Write and perform your own Advent hymn expressing beliefs about Jesus in preparation for his birth.

Textual references

Psalm 21: 1-7	David praises God for victory and blessing
Psalm 23	The Lord, our Good Shepherd

Key vocabulary

O Antiphons	a series of short, special prayers sung or said during the last seven days of Advent. Each one begins with 'O' and gives a title to Jesus, highlighting a different way He shows God's love and helps people.
Psalms	a sacred song or poem, often expressing praise, prayer, or thanksgiving to God. Many of the psalms in the Bible were written by King David and are used in worship to communicate feelings of joy, sorrow, gratitude, or longing.

Teacher Notes

The O Antiphons

The O Antiphons are a series of seven short prayers or chants used in the Catholic Church during the last seven days of Advent, from 17th to 23rd December. Each antiphon begins with the word 'O' and addresses Jesus with a special title that highlights an aspect of His identity and the promises of God's salvation. The titles include 'O Sapientia' (O Wisdom), 'O Adonai' (O Lord), and 'O Clavis David' (O Key of David), among others.

These prayers have been used in Christian liturgy for centuries, particularly in the Vespers service, and they guide the faithful to reflect on who Jesus is and what His coming means for the world. Theologically, the O Antiphons link closely to Scripture, drawing on messianic prophecies from the Old Testament, such as Isaiah, and the understanding that Jesus fulfils God's covenant promises.

By praying or singing the O Antiphons, Christians prepare their hearts for the coming of Christ at Christmas, focusing on themes of hope, justice, wisdom, and salvation. For pupils, exploring these prayers offers a way to connect with the Advent season, understand biblical titles for Jesus, and reflect on God's promises in their own lives.

Suggested artistic representations of O Clavis David

- O Clavis David mosaic in the Cathedral of St Peter in Chains, Cincinnati*

This mosaic depicts Christ holding a key and a sceptre, signifying His authority to open and close the gates of Heaven. The key represents Christ's role in granting access to salvation. Explore how the key in Christ's hand symbolizes His power to unlock the path to eternal life. Discuss the significance of the sceptre as a symbol of kingship and divine authority. Encourage pupils to consider how Christ's authority as the Key of David influences their understanding of His role in salvation.
- Anglo-Saxon Illumination from the New Minister Liber Vitae*

This medieval manuscript illumination portrays Christ as the Key of David, emphasizing His role in unlocking the Kingdom of Heaven. The intricate design reflects the reverence and artistry of the period. Discuss the cultural and historical context of the illumination, highlighting the fusion of faith and art in medieval Christianity. Invite pupils to reflect on how the depiction of Christ as the Key of David in this artwork deepens their understanding of His salvific mission.
- Clavis David painting by Sr Angsar Holmberg CSJ*

In this painting, Christ is depicted as the Key of David, holding a large, ornate key that symbolizes His authority to open and close the gates of Heaven. The background features a vibrant, swirling pattern that represents the dynamic and transformative power of Christ's coming. Explore the significance of the swirling patterns, which may symbolize the movement of the Holy Spirit and the unfolding of God's plan. This artwork invites viewers to contemplate the profound mystery of Christ's role as the Key of David and to consider how they can open their hearts to His transformative presence.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 6

Week 1

Hear & Believe

 U6.2.1	Show an understanding of ONE Old Testament scripture passage that shows the importance of women in salvation history, recognising authorial intention and historical context (cf. teacher notes for options from which teachers may choose).
<i>Know</i>	God gives women important roles to help His people and fulfil His promises, even in times when women had fewer freedoms. Women in the Old Testament, such as Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, and Esther, show courage, faith, and trust in God, especially in difficult or dangerous situations. Wisdom, patience, and faithfulness in these women lead to success and show that God values their actions as part of salvation history.

 <i>Discern</i>	Women prophets in the Old Testament are brave, faithful, and wise. They follow God's plan, even when it is hard. Suggested discovery questions (cf. teacher notes for questions relating to individual women) 1. What if these women lived today? How might their accomplishment be different and what challenges would they face? 2. Why do you think God chose this woman (or these women) for such an important role? 3. What qualities did they have that made them the right person to help deliver God's plan?
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 <i>Respond</i>	Identify virtues from the <i>Catholic School Pupil Profile</i> that these women demonstrated and explain how they did so. Consider how they would respond to an issue of injustice in the world today, e.g. people not upholding the dignity of the human person or denying the rights of others.
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Textual references

Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7
Exodus 1:8-22; 2:1-10
Judges 4:4-11; 5:7-15
1 Samuel 1:5, 9-11, 26-28
Esther 2:4, 15-17; 3:1-6, 12-13; 4:1-4, 8a-17; 5:1-8; 7:1-6, 9-10; 8:3-12

Sarah
Miriam
Deborah
Hannah
Esther

Key vocabulary

salvation history	the story of how God saves and helps people. It shows the way God works through people, events, and families over time to bring His love, teach His ways, and prepare the world for Jesus.
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Teacher Notes

Women Prophets in the Old Testament *(N.B. each pupil should study ONE of the following only)*

Sarah

- Sarah is the wife of Abraham and plays an important role in God's covenant to bless all of Abraham's descendants.
- Even though Sarah is very old, God promises she will have a son, and she gives birth to Isaac, showing God keeps His promises.
- The fact that God enables Sarah to have a baby when she is old shows that nothing is impossible to God. This message is celebrated by Mary when the Angel Gabriel announces her pregnancy.
- In ancient times, not having children was seen as a great sadness for women. Sarah's life shows how amazing God's blessing can be.

Miriam

- Moses' sister. She watches over him when he is placed in a basket in the river and makes sure he is safe, showing how God uses her to protect an important leader.
- Miriam (along with Moses' mother and Pharaoh's daughter) helps rescue Moses, showing that women are crucial for God's plan of salvation for His people.
- Her actions show faith and wisdom. By bravely speaking to Pharaoh's daughter and suggesting her own mother as a nurse, Miriam shows trust in God.
- Pharaoh is afraid of the Israelites growing strong, so he orders baby boys to be killed. This makes Miriam's bravery even more important within God's plan.

Deborah

- God chooses Deborah to be a leader. She is a prophet and a judge who guides Israel, showing that God calls both men and women to lead His people.
- Deborah helps Israel win a battle. She tells Barak, the army commander, to fight against their enemies. With God's help, they win; showing that God gives victory through those who trust in Him.
- Barak refuses to go into battle without Deborah, showing people trust her God-given wisdom and leadership.
- At this time, Israel has no king, and people often forget God. God sends judges, such as Deborah, to remind the Israelites to follow Him.

Hannah

- Mother of one of the important prophets of Israel.
- Hannah is unable to have children, which makes her very sad. She prays to God and trusts Him to help her.
- God answers Hannah's prayer and blesses her with a son, Samuel, showing that He listens to prayers.
- Samuel becomes a great prophet who helps guide Israel, showing that Hannah's faith is part of God's plan of salvation.
- Hannah dedicates Samuel to serve in the Temple as she has already promised to God, showing that she is faithful and grateful to Him.

Esther

- A heroine of the Book of Esther.
- Haman, a high official, convinces King Xerxes to issue a law ordering all Jews to be killed because he is angry at Esther's cousin, Mordecai, for not bowing to him.
- Esther approaches the king without being asked to, which is dangerous. She invites him and Haman to two banquets as part of her plan to save her people. This shows her bravery and trust in God.
- At the second banquet, Esther finally reveals to the king that Haman had planned to kill the Jews. Because she has gained King Xerxes' trust, he becomes very angry with Haman.
- Esther and Mordecai write a new law allowing the Jews to defend themselves.
- Because of Esther's bravery, patience, and wisdom, the Jewish people are saved from destruction under King Xerxes' law.
- Esther's accomplishment is still remembered today in the Jewish festival of Purim.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 6

Week 2

Believe

 U6.2.2	Use theological language to explain what is meant by describing the women of the Old Testament as 'true protagonists of salvation history' (Pope St John Paul II's address, General Audience, 27 March 1996), making relevant links with the stories of some key women from the Old Testament.
Know	A protagonist is the key person in a story whose actions and decisions shape what happens, often showing bravery or wisdom Salvation history tells how God's plan to save people unfolds across time through individuals, families, and nations. Women in the Old Testament, like Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, and Esther, are called 'true protagonists of salvation history' by Pope St John Paul II because their faith and courage help bring about God's promises.

 D6.2.1	Think about the role of women in the story of salvation, giving a response to this statement: 'Looking at the role of women in the story of salvation, women today do not play a large enough role in the life of the Church' Support your answer with reasons and discussing why people might give different answers.	
Discern	Women are crucial in the story of salvation; without them undertaking their special role from God, His plan would not have worked out the way it has.	Suggested discovery questions, used in preparation for the debate identified in D6.2.1 above 1. What if the women of the Old Testament studied had not responded to God's call in the historical story of salvation? Would the world be the same today? 2. Throughout His ministry, Jesus welcomes and works with many women. What does this tell us about how He values women's role in faith? 3. Why might some people disagree with you? Why do you reject this different point of view?

 R6.2.1	Reflect on their own experience and consider the women in their lives who have been important or significant.
Respond	Write about a woman who has shown qualities such as faith, bravery, wisdom of kindness just like the women in the Old Testament, e.g. your mother, or a female relative, a saint such as St. Mother Teresa, St. Josephine Bakhita etc. What makes her so special? How has she helped or inspired you? Which biblical woman (or women) does she remind you of, and how? Create a 'faith collage' of women who inspire you. Explain why you've chosen each woman. Include biblical women, women from history and women from your own life.

Textual references

Key vocabulary

protagonist	the main figure in a story who often faces challenges and shows courage, like a hero or heroine.
salvation history	the story of how God saves and helps people. It shows the way God works through people, events, and families over time to bring His love, teach His ways, and prepare the world for Jesus.

Teacher Notes

[Written news report](#) on Pope St John Paul II's speech, *Women's Indispensable Role in Salvation History*

This week explores the theological significance of women in salvation history. Scripture consistently reveals that God works through the free cooperation of individuals, and women play indispensable roles in advancing His saving plan. The Old Testament presents numerous examples of women whose trust, courage, and obedience shape the course of Israel's story:

- Sarah becomes the mother of God's chosen people through her faith in God's promise
- Miriam protects and supports Moses, ensuring the deliverance of Israel.
- Deborah, a prophet and judge, leads Israel with wisdom and authority.
- Hannah dedicates her long-awaited child to God, whose life becomes central to Israel's faith.
- Esther risks her life to save her people.

These women are not marginal figures but decisive agents in God's covenantal plan.

The Church affirms this explicitly. Pope St John Paul II describes the women of the Old Testament as 'true protagonists of salvation history', indicating that salvation unfolds not only through kings, prophets, and patriarchs, but through women whose fidelity to God makes possible the fulfilment of His promises. Their stories prepare the way for Mary, whose 'yes' at the Annunciation becomes the model of perfect discipleship. In this sense, salvation history has a rhythm of faithful women who make God's work visible through their choices, courage, and love.

For pupils, this teaching deepens understanding of dignity, vocation, and the equal value of men and women in God's eyes. It challenges cultural assumptions that minimise women's contributions and encourages recognition that God calls all people, regardless of status or circumstance, to participate in His mission. The lesson also invites reflection on contemporary women—saints, family members, community leaders—whose lives continue this theological legacy of faith-filled action.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 6

Week 3

Hear & Believe



U6.2.3

Show understanding of the Christian belief that Mary is the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises, making relevant links to Luke 1:26-56 and the accounts of the women of the Old Testament. Contrast Luke with the authorial focus in Matthew's account (Matthew 1:18-25).

Know

Mary accepts God's plan with trust and love, showing how a single person can carry out God's promises.

Matthew highlights Joseph's obedience and protection of Mary and Jesus, showing that God's plan involves the faithful actions of others too.

Mary's story connects to Old Testament women like Sarah and Hannah, who experienced God's promises through courage and faithfulness, demonstrating continuity in God's plan.



Discern

You would need to be brave, faithful, and wise like Mary is to play an important role in salvation history.

Suggested discovery questions

1. If you had to choose between following God's plan and keeping your own safe, comfortable life, how would you decide, and why might that choice take courage like Mary's?
2. How could someone use bravery, faith, and wisdom in different ways to impact God's plan? Could one quality be more important than the others in certain situations?
3. Imagine God asked ordinary people today to take a role in salvation history. How might society respond, and what challenges would they face compared with Mary?



Respond

Talk to family members about what their hopes and dreams for your life are. What are your own hopes and dreams for your vision of your future? How will you know when your hopes and dreams are fulfilled?

What do you think God is calling you to do in your life? Does this change how you might live your life?

Textual references

Genesis 18:10-14
Isaiah 7:14
1 Samuel 2: 1-10
Luke 1:46-56
Matthew 1:18-25

Sarah's miraculous pregnancy
Prophecy of the virgin birth
Hannah's prayer
The Magnificat
Joseph's dream

Key vocabulary

discernment	listening, thinking and praying to understand what God is asking you to do
incarnation	the belief that God became truly man in the person of Jesus

Teacher Notes

Mary as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies

Mary holds a unique place in Christian belief as the mother of Jesus, the Saviour promised throughout the Old Testament. Christians interpret Isaiah 7:14, which speaks of a virgin giving birth to Immanuel, as foretelling Mary's role in salvation history. This highlights the continuity between Old Testament prophecy and the events of the New Testament.

Mary is sometimes called the 'new Eve'. Whereas Eve's actions with Adam contributed to the fall of humanity, Mary's obedience to God plays a pivotal role in humanity's redemption. In Christian terms, redemption refers to being saved from sin, which Jesus accomplishes by coming into the world. Mary's willing acceptance of God's plan demonstrates the importance of faith and trust in fulfilling divine promises.

Connections can be made with other women of the Old Testament. Sarah's miraculous pregnancy with Isaac (Genesis 18:10-14) parallels Elizabeth's later pregnancy with John the Baptist, showing how trusting in God enables the fulfilment of His plan. Similarly, Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2: 1-10 is reflected in Mary's Magnificat, a song of praise and recognition of God's justice and greatness (Luke 1:46-55). Women like Miriam, Deborah, and Esther also demonstrate courage and faithfulness, showing how God works through those who trust Him.

Matthew's account (1:18-25) focuses on Joseph, highlighting his obedience and protection of Mary and Jesus. Together, Mary and Joseph's roles fulfil Old Testament prophecies and reveal how God's plan involves the faithful responses of those He chooses.

For pupils, this learning helps them understand that vocation involves listening to God, making courageous choices, and recognising that ordinary people can participate in extraordinary works of grace. It encourages them to see Mary and Joseph not as distant historical figures, but as models of strong, faithful decision-making within the complexities of real life.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 6

Week 4

Believe & Celebrate

	U6.2.4 Use theological language to describe and explain the belief that Mary became the 'Mother of God'.
<i>Know</i>	Mary is called the 'Mother of God' because she gave birth to Jesus, who is fully God and fully human from the moment of His conception. The Orthodox Church uses the title 'Theotokos', which means 'God-bearer', to show that Mary carried God in her womb. As the mother of Jesus, Mary is also seen as the mother of all Christians, since through Baptism we belong to the Body of Christ.

 <i>Discern</i>	Trust, obedience and love are important words when thinking about Mary. <table border="1" data-bbox="884 630 2128 920"> <tr> <th data-bbox="884 630 1232 662">Suggested discovery questions</th> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1232 630 2128 920"> 1. Explore a range of titles for Mary, e.g. 'Mother of God,' 'Immaculate Mary,' 'Queen of Heaven', 'Queen of Peace.' Which is your favourite title for Mary and why? 2. Can you think of a new title for Mary and explain why you chose this title? 3. How do you think Mary's trust and obedience helped her show love to God and to others? What could this look like in your own life if you tried to act in the same way? </td> </tr> </table>	Suggested discovery questions	1. Explore a range of titles for Mary, e.g. 'Mother of God,' 'Immaculate Mary,' 'Queen of Heaven', 'Queen of Peace.' Which is your favourite title for Mary and why? 2. Can you think of a new title for Mary and explain why you chose this title? 3. How do you think Mary's trust and obedience helped her show love to God and to others? What could this look like in your own life if you tried to act in the same way?
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	R6.2.2 Compare their own and others' experiences about the importance of Mary the mother of Jesus in their spiritual life.
<i>Respond</i>	What are some ways you show love and care for others, just like Mary shows her love for Jesus? Mary showed trust in God's plan. How do you show trust in God? Explore the stories of St Bernadette and St Therese of Lisieux. How did Mary influence their lives?

Textual references

Key vocabulary

Immaculate conception	Mary is called 'Immaculate' because she was conceived without original sin, chosen to be pure and holy from the start of her life
Mother of God	Mary is called the 'Mother of God' because she gave birth to Jesus, who is both fully God and fully man
Queen of Heaven	Mary is called 'Queen of Heaven' because, as the mother of Jesus, the King of Heaven, she shares in His glory and reigns with Him
Queen of Peace	Mary is called 'Queen of Peace' because she is the mother of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and continues to intercede for peace in the world

Teacher Notes

St Bernadette of Lourdes (1844-1879)

Bernadette Soubirous was a poor, uneducated girl from Lourdes, France. In 1858, at the age of 14, she experienced 18 apparitions of Mary in a grotto at Massabielle. Mary appeared as a 'lady dressed in white' and later identified herself as the Immaculate Conception, a title Bernadette did not understand at the time but which confirmed the Church's teaching about Mary's sinlessness. Mary asked Bernadette to pray the Rosary, to call people to repentance, and to tell the priests to build a chapel at the site. A spring of water also appeared, which became associated with healing. Bernadette lived a humble, prayerful life, later joining the Sisters of Charity, where she endured suffering with faith. Mary's influence gave Bernadette courage, obedience, and a deep trust in God. Lourdes became one of the most important Marian shrines in the world.

St Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897)

Thérèse Martin, known as the 'Little Flower,' grew up in France and entered the Carmelite convent at Lisieux at age 15. She had a deep devotion to Mary, who she saw as both motherly and approachable. Thérèse often turned to Mary in prayer for guidance and comfort, especially during times of spiritual struggle. Mary's example of humility, obedience, and hidden strength inspired Thérèse's own 'Little Way,' doing small things with great love for God. She trusted Mary to lead her closer to Jesus, recognising Mary's role as both intercessor and model of holiness. Thérèse's simple, childlike faith echoed Mary's trust in God. She died young, aged 24, but her writings, especially *Story of a Soul*, have inspired millions. Mary's quiet, faithful influence helped Thérèse live a life of love, simplicity, and total surrender to God's will.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 6

Week 5

Believe & Celebrate



U6.2.5

Show understanding of how and why the Magnificat prayer forms radical expectations of the Messiah.

Know

In the Magnificat, Mary shows that the Messiah will care for the poor and the lowly, not rule with power and force like people expected.

Mary says that the Messiah will bring down proud and selfish leaders and lift up those who seem unimportant.

These are radical expectations because they challenge the usual idea of kings as rich, powerful and only serving themselves.



D6.2.2

Explore how they and others interpret their own and the composer's meaning, in response to a variety of sung settings of the Magnificat.

Discern

Music is a good way of expressing Mary's joy in the Magnificat.

Suggested discovery questions

1. If you were Mary, how might singing her words of praise feel different from just saying them?
2. Why do you think the Church still sings the Magnificat today, instead of only reading it aloud?
3. If someone today wrote music to express Mary's joy, what style do you think would best show her feelings, and why?



R6.2.3

Consider what life or task God might be calling them to live or do and reflect on how their 'Yes' could transform their own lives and the lives of their community.

Respond

Reflect on how you've used your *Walk with Me* Advent calendar to transform others' lives.

Set yourself the challenge of saying 'Yes' to God each day and keep a diary of how you've done this throughout the week and reflect on how these acts transformed your and others' lives.

How might God call you to live? How could this transform your own life and the life of others around you?

Textual references

Luke 1:46-55

The Magnificat

Sung versions of the Magnificat

[CJM Music](#)

[Wild Mountain Thyme version](#)

[Holy is His name](#)

The Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) is Mary's great song of praise spoken during her visit to Elizabeth. The name comes from the Latin word for 'magnify'. Mary begins, 'My soul magnifies the Lord.' It is both personal and universal: Mary thanks God for what he has done for her, but also proclaims his justice and mercy for the whole world. The prayer echoes Old Testament themes, especially Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:1–10), and shows Mary's deep knowledge of Scripture. It reveals her humility, faith, and trust, recognising that God works through the lowly to bring about his plan.

In the Catholic Church, the Magnificat is prayed daily in the Liturgy of the Hours at Evening Prayer (Vespers). This gives it a central place in the Church's rhythm of prayer. By repeating Mary's words, Catholics join in her praise and align themselves with her faith in God's promises. Singing the Magnificat is especially important: music helps the words enter both heart and mind, lifting prayer to God in a communal and joyful way. Through the Magnificat, the Church honours Mary as model disciple, while celebrating God's ongoing work of salvation for all people.

The Magnificat: a radical proclamation

Mary's song of praise to God after she learns she will be the mother of Jesus. It is not just a prayer of joy but a radical proclamation of how God's kingdom works very differently from human kingdoms. In Mary's time, people expected the Messiah to be a powerful ruler who would defeat enemies and restore Israel through strength and authority. Instead, Mary describes a Saviour who will overturn human expectations.

Mary praises God for 'casting down the mighty from their thrones and raising up the lowly'. This is radical because kings and rulers in the ancient world were rarely challenged and often acted for their own benefit. Mary declares that God's justice will bring change: the proud will fall, and the humble and poor will be lifted up.

She also speaks of God 'filling the hungry with good things and sending the rich away empty'. This turns social order upside down. Wealth and status, often seen as signs of power and favour, are not what God values. Instead, God sides with those in need and promises justice for the oppressed.

The Magnificat is therefore not just a personal prayer but a vision of God's kingdom where power is redefined. It is both spiritual and social: a prophecy that salvation will bring about justice, mercy and equality. This makes it a deeply challenging and transformative prayer, still read and sung in Christian worship today.



Prophecy and Promise

Year 6

Week 6

Live



U6.2.6

Show understanding of the life of individual women today who are responding to God's call in their life, making relevant links to Mary's 'Yes' to God

Know

Some women choose Religious Life, joining an order where they dedicate their lives to God through prayer and service, inspired by Mary's 'Yes' to God.

Religious orders are communities of men or women who follow rules to live out Jesus' teachings in special ways, such as helping the poor, teaching, or caring for the sick.

Other women respond to God's call outside religious orders, by working for justice or serving others, showing the same trust in God that Mary showed.



Discern

St Paul reminds us that God calls people to serve in different ways. They are all good ways to live.

Suggested discovery questions

1. What if everyone in the world had the same gifts and talents? How would that make life easier, and how might it make life harder?
2. St Paul says all gifts come from God and are equally important. Do you agree that a gift like kindness is just as important as a gift like leadership? Why or why not?
3. Some people think only certain roles, like being a priest or a leader, matter most in the Church. Others believe every role, even the quiet ones, is equally valuable. Which view makes most sense to you, and what reasons would you give to someone who disagrees?



Respond

Write a mission statement for your own life which defines how you might serve God and His Church. If you were to live this out, how might it impact you and the community in which you live?

How could you be like Mary and the religious sisters by saying 'Yes' to God and use your talents to benefit others?

Textual references

Key vocabulary

Teacher Notes

Different gifts, same God

St Paul teaches the early Christian communities that God gives people different gifts and talents. These are not just skills like singing or running fast, but spiritual gifts that help build up the Church and show God's love in the world. Examples Paul names include wisdom, teaching, helping, leadership, healing and encouragement.

Paul insists that no gift is more valuable than another. This was a radical message at the time, because people often thought leaders or wealthy citizens were more important than ordinary people. Paul challenges this by saying every gift is given by the same Spirit and is part of God's plan. The Church is like a body with many parts. Just as a body needs eyes, hands and feet to work properly, the Church needs people with different gifts. If one part is missing, the whole body suffers.

For pupils, this means that every person has something unique and valuable to offer. God calls people in different ways: some to lead, some to serve quietly, some to encourage others, some to show compassion. All these ways are good and needed. This teaching helps children understand that they do not need to compare themselves with others but can value their own gifts as part of God's work.

Sisters of Mercy

The Sisters of Mercy were founded in Ireland in 1831 by Catherine McAuley. They focus on education, healthcare, and helping those in need. Their 'yes' to God is shown through practical acts of service, caring for the poor and vulnerable. By choosing to live simply and follow Jesus' example, they bring God's love into communities. Teachers can help pupils see that, like Mary, the Sisters trust God's plan and respond with courage and compassion. Their mission reflects the Church's teaching that faith must be lived through action, showing how prayer and service are linked. Pupils can discuss how making a lifelong commitment to help others transforms both the individuals who serve and the communities they support.

Ursulines

Founded by St Angela Merici in 1535 in Italy, the Ursulines dedicate themselves primarily to education, especially for girls. Their 'yes' to God mirrors Mary's obedience and willingness to serve. Through teaching, they guide young people to grow morally and spiritually, helping them understand God's love. Their choice to focus on education is an example of listening to God's call and using their gifts to meet a particular need. Teachers can highlight how this mission transforms lives, showing that serving God does not always mean the same thing for everyone: some serve through prayer, some through education, and some through healthcare or social work. The Ursulines show that faith and service work hand in hand to build a more just and compassionate world.

Sisters of Loreto

Founded in 1609 by Mary Ward in Europe, the Loreto Sisters focus on education and missionary work. Their 'yes' to God is expressed through teaching and living out Christian values in schools and communities. They emphasise nurturing children's minds and spirits, often in places where education is limited. Pupils can explore how the sisters' obedience and trust in God enables them to bring hope and knowledge, showing that serving God can be about empowering others. Like Mary, they say 'yes' daily, trusting God to guide their work. Teachers can use their story to discuss how different missions meet different human needs while remaining united in serving God and the Church.

Daughters of St Paul

Founded in 1915 in Italy, the Daughters of St Paul call themselves the 'Media Nuns' because they use technology, such as books, films, and social media, to spread God's Word. Their 'yes' to God allows them to use modern tools creatively for evangelisation. They demonstrate that following God's call can involve innovation and courage, reaching people in ways that traditional methods cannot. Teachers can highlight the connection with Mary, who trusted God's plan, showing pupils that saying 'yes' to God today can look different but is always rooted in love and faithfulness. Their mission encourages pupils to think about how their own talents and interests could serve God and others.

[Religious Order fact files](#) (Carmelites and Missionaries of Charity)

[Vocation Films: Called to Religious Life](#)

N.B. These religious order overviews are provided for information. There is no requirement for pupils to study any or all of them. Alternatively, pupils may study an individual woman who has responded to God's call.