

**Focus:** Being Kind to Others-Caring for Others.

**Materials:**

- Prayer Altar: Cross, Candle, Chasuble on stand (priest’s vestment) and Altar Cloth
- Advent Wreath-and flames
- CD-Little Lit Advent Cycle C
- Gospel: In Lesson Plan
- Emotions Poster
- Book: Mary’s Prayer

**Gathering** (have children sit on floor-Criss-Cross Applesauce)

*Say: Good Morning everyone, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. Last week we talked about being fair and kind to others. This week we will hear a story about Jesus' mother visiting her cousin and staying to help.*

**Opening Prayer**

Together we make the Sign of the Cross (do in reverse so children can mirror).

*Say: Now let’s put our hands together and bow our heads.*

*Let us pray.*

*Dear Jesus, As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, open our eyes to your presence all around us. Help us to celebrate your birth by showing love to others.*

*Today is the 4th and last week of Advent. Next week we will celebrate Jesus’ birth—Christmas. As we light the last candle, the candle of Love let us remember that God loves us so much that he sent Jesus to show us his love.*

*Prayer: Loving God, we thank You for Your gift of love - shown to us perfectly in Jesus Christ our Lord. Help us to prepare our hearts to receive His love. We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus. Amen.*

**Song/Movement**

*Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, track: 1, from Advent Cycle C*

Play music, encourage children to stretch or move to the music (clapping, stamp feet march in place to the beat), turn to each other and shake hands, saying hello, etc. )

<p>Chorus: I got your hope, peace, joy and love The best gifts come from above I got your hope, peace, joy and love in my heart (Repeat)</p> <p>Hope is a light in the darkness, shining brightly on Bethlehem town</p>	<p>The Messiah is born; he’s our king and our lord; the promise of hope we have found Glory to god in the highest; peace on earth and good will to all men Take the star in the east to the prince of peace who will someday be coming again.</p> <p>Repeat chorus 2x</p>	<p>An angel appeared from the heavens, bringing news to the shepherds that night. Good tidings of joy, in the birth of a boy, born to give us forgiveness and life. Jesus Emmanuel Savior; little baby a gift from above He loved us so much he gave his only son, the gift of hope, peace, joy and love.</p> <p>Repeat Chorus 4x</p>
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### Memory Verse

Say: *Now let's take a moment together to learn a verse from the bible.*

*Blessed are you, Mary, because you believed and trusted in God.*

Have the children repeat the verse after you a couple of times.

Say: *Mary was Jesus' mother. She was special because when God asked her to do something important she said yes. It was very hard, because she didn't understand what was going to happen, but she trusted that God loved her, like he loves all of us, and wouldn't want her to do something that would make her sad.*

### Gospel Story

Say: *Today we are reading from the Gospel of Luke.*

Have children make sign of the cross on their forehead, mouth and heart saying. *"Lord, open my mind, my lips and my heart so that I may learn it, speak it and love it."*

**Read:** None, pp. N/A,

A Reading from the Gospel of Luke

Invite children to repeat what you say and do.

After the angel Gabriel told Mary she would be the mother of Jesus.

[Chatty hand, thumbs against fingers]

he also said that her cousin Elizabeth would have a baby,

[Rock a baby in your arms]

even though she was much older than Mary.

[Hold yourself tall and show someone who is taller than you with your hand]

Mary set out to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

[Walk in place, swinging your arms]

When she arrived, Mary said hello to Elizabeth.

[Wave "hello"]

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and said:

[Chatty hand]

"Blessed are you, Mary and blessed is your baby."

[Rock baby in your arms]

Then Elizabeth said:

[Chatty hand]

"When you greeted me, my baby jumped with joy inside me.

[Big smile and put hands to face]

"Blessed are you because you believed and trusted God."

[Point heavenward]

After the reading say: *The Gospel of the Lord*

Children respond: *Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ*

**Discussion Starters:**

- *Who does Mary Visit?*
- *Why are the two women so happy to see each other?*
- *What happens to Elizabeth when Mary greets her? (Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit )*
- *What does Elizabeth call Mary? (Blessed)*
- *How does Elizabeth know that Mary is the Mother of the Lord?*

**Reflection on Reading:**

*Mary found out that her cousin Elizabeth was going to have a baby, just like she was and she went to visit Elizabeth so they could share their good news and so that Mary could help her in any way she could.*

*In the gospel reading today, Mary travels to visit Elizabeth. Mary is pregnant with Jesus, and Elizabeth is also with child. We can imagine the excitement when Mary greets Elizabeth. The baby in her womb leaps for joy when Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and she speaks a profound truth calling Mary "blessed" and the "Mother of the Lord."*

*On this fourth Sunday of Advent, the gospel announces that Jesus is coming, and we have to be ready.*

- *How do you react when a friend or family member who lives far away comes to visit you?*
- *What are some things that you have done to get ready to celebrate Jesus' birth?*
- *How can you spread the joy of Christmas to those around you?*

**Gospel Activity**Activity 1:**Feelings Dance**

Lead the children in a discussion of the different expressions and body language illustrated in each picture on the emotions picture. Use some of the below questions to prompt discussion.

- Which feelings do you see in people's faces? What could make them feel this way?
- What other parts of the body were used to express feelings? Describe and have children act them out.
- How is posture used in expressing feelings?
- What feelings are easy to express through pantomiming?
- What feelings are easy to express in real life?

Explain that by working together, the children will create a "Feelings Dance" of the words listed on the poster.

Read each word on the poster and have children act out each emotion using facial expressions and body language. Repeat the list of words and again have children move their bodies and faces to express the feeling; this series of words and movements becomes their "Feelings Dance."

Tell them when they know other's emotions, they can be good friends to them. You can be happy with them, or sad. Help them to let their angry feelings go, help them say they are sorry if they feel guilty, find something to play if they are bored.

Ask what other things you could do when you know how someone else feels,

- afraid—help them find something that doesn't scare them,
- tired—not keep asking them to play when they want to take a rest or read a book.
- Proud of doing the right thing—telling them you are proud of them too.
- Embarrassed because they made a mistake, help them to know that everyone makes mistakes and they can try to do it right the next time.

### Activity 2:

Read the Book "Mary's Prayer"

This book tells the prayer "The Hail Mary" We use this prayer many times in our lives. We use this prayer to remind us of Mary's love for God and all God's people. When she was called to do a great thing for God and all His people she said yes, even if it might be a struggle at times. Mary is also called the "Mother of the Church". Not the buildings, but the people who make up the church. People like me and you. She cares for you like your mother. She loves you and is always ready to listen to your prayer.

Complete the weekly bulletin as a group-let the children color them if there is extra time

### **Closing Prayer**

(Children respond: "I Believe!")

Ask: *Do you believe in God, who wants us to trust him?*

*Do you believe in Jesus, who comes to be our shepherd and bring us peace?*

*Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who blessed Mary and Elizabeth and blesses us everyday?*

### **Sending Forth**

*Say: Today we learned about different feelings we can have. When we know other's emotions we can be good friends to them. Everyone is different so some things that make you happy can scare some one else, like roller coasters. We should always remember that even though other people are different, God wants us to love them just the same.*

### **Lining Up/Closing Song**

Play "Change My Heart O' God." track 2 from Little Lit Advent Cycle C while children put away any materials and lineup. Hand out weekly bulletins. Remind them it is important that they return to their family quietly so that we may all listen and pray together in church.