

Travelling Nativity- Information Sheet

The distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem is around 70 to 80 miles via the routes available to Mary and Joseph at the time they needed to travel. They would have made this journey without any mechanised transport and with Mary in an advanced stage of pregnancy. They would have been grateful for the hospitality of relatives, friends and strangers along the way.

The tradition of having figures of Mary, Joseph and a donkey travelling from home to home during Advent is becoming popular in the United Kingdom. The tradition originated in Mexico where it is known as posada.

The idea is that a set of simple figures make their way from home to home within the parish on their way to the Church where they will arrive on Christmas Eve. In this limited way we try to replicate the journey Mary and Joseph had to make in preparation for the first Christmas. We hope that by sharing this simple process and a liturgy with our children we can focus their minds (for a little while at least) on our preparations for the birth of Jesus Christ.

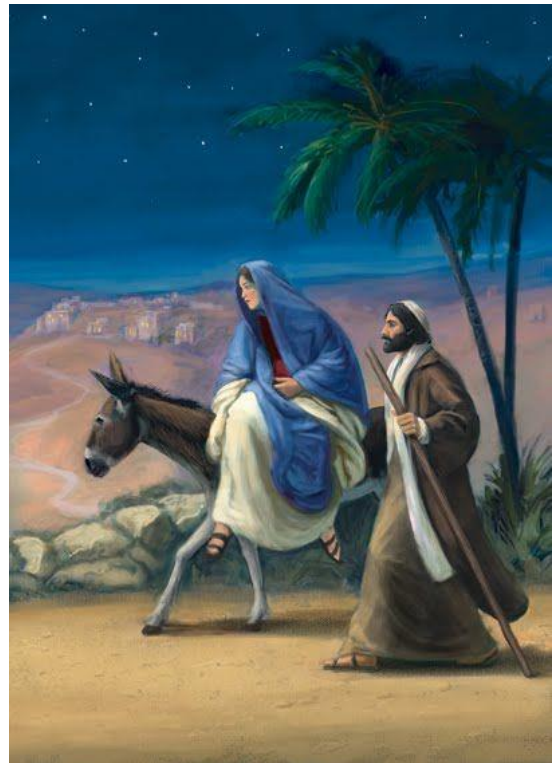
(If it is not possible to organize this within a parish it could also be done within a school context, with the figures travelling between classes each day)

Depending on each child's maturity and understanding they should be able to take a role in the short liturgy, whether it's lighting the candle, placing the figures, reading or composing their own bidding prayers. Older children may be able to appreciate how physically demanding the journey would have been without cars, buses or trains, something they might not have considered before when hearing the Nativity story. Adults may also reflect on the hardships of having to leave home on such a journey knowing your baby will be born soon. We hope this will help adults and children to appreciate the Advent journey and the Nativity as real events and not just a story.

Another function of the travelling Nativity is to remind us how important we are to each other as a community and to appreciate the kindness of friends and strangers. As our parishes are large we cannot hope to know everyone well but we can try to know others better. The giving and the receiving of a little hospitality with families you may not know is an important part of this process. When you and your family see the figures on the altar over Christmas time you will know that you, and the families you have met, have all shared in the same journey.

Practical details

The travelling Nativity will begin on the first Sunday of Advent, which is Sunday 27th November and will end when the figures are brought to the Church in time for mass on Christmas Eve. It starts with one family taking the figures home from the parish. Using the liturgy attached, they will welcome the nativity figures into their home and find a place, perhaps in a window, to display



them. The next day this family will pack up the figures and travel to a neighbor, who has agreed to go on this journey with Mary and Joseph.

When it is your turn to welcome the Holy Family, you and your family will receive the figures as you welcome the family who has had them for the day before you. They will arrange a time to come to your home and lead the liturgy and they will leave the figures with you. You will provide light refreshments (tea, coffee, juice, biscuits...maybe a mince pie). On the following day or a subsequent day, you will travel to the next family's home and this time your family will lead the liturgy.

We imagine most families will prefer an early evening, say between 6/7pm and 7/8pm (we don't anticipate the handover liturgy and refreshments will take longer than an hour). You will therefore need to be able to set aside an hour on 2 separate days (once to receive the figures in your home and once to travel with the figures to the next home).

You will be provided with the names and contact details of the family bringing the figures to you and of the family you will be taking them to so that you can arrange mutually convenient times to meet. We will also provide a contact number in case you aren't able to pass on or receive the figures due to an emergency. Please be aware that your own contact details will similarly be shared with the family bringing the figures to you and the family receiving them from you.

Thank you for expressing an interest in this process. We really hope that you will be able to find the time needed for this in your Advent calendar and that by taking part you will enrich your own and your childrens' joy in this year's celebration of Christmas.

If you are willing to participate please email ****add contact email here**** with your name, address, contact number and/or email. Please let us know your preferred dates and we will do all we can to accommodate your availability.