

## INTRODUCTION

Begin by helping your pupils to recall the details of the Nativity itself:

- Who was there when Jesus was born?
- In what kind of building or setting was He born?
- Who visited Him?
- In what part of the world was He born?
- When was Jesus born?
- Who knows exactly what it was like when Jesus was born? Who knows what Mary looked like, or which animals were present at Jesus' birth?
- How do we know anything about the Nativity?

Go back to the scripture and see what our 'source material' tells us. (Matthew 1:18-2:12 and Luke 2:1-20)

- Thinking of the two versions of the story, what do we know for sure?
- Are there details that have been left out?
- Do we sometimes make up details with our own imagination? (Combining the two stories for example)
- Why do we do that? (Perhaps to satisfy our curiosity or because we want Jesus to be like us)

Have your pupils think about who Jesus is for people around the world.

- Who did Jesus come for?
- Who are followers of Jesus? Where do they live?
- Who reads the stories of Jesus' birth?

## ACTIVITY

This activity will help pupils think about the impact of Jesus in a broader sense. It will remind them that there are Catholics and Christians who share their faith around the world. It will also help them become aware of how their own culture and context informs the way they think about faith in God. While the Nativity did occur in a certain time and place, we as Christians have the ability to take Jesus as our brother. We make Jesus look like us when we read the scriptures. Many people around the world do the same. The Nativity sets (on the accompanying page) are one way to reflect on how Jesus has come to save the whole world, not just ourselves. In addition, the reflections will help students connect the cultural and spiritual values of each country to the faith expressed in the Nativity.

Have your pupils look at and reflect upon the Nativity scenes from round the world. Have them do this either by looking at one specifically in groups or looking at multiple and then comparing them.

- What do you see?
- How is this Nativity unique or different from others you have seen before?
- Where is it from and why do you suppose the person who made it created it that way?

You might also want to ask your pupils to create a model or drawing of the Nativity scene using their own imagination. Such depictions of the Nativity are a great way to share our faith with each other. Because we are all missionaries by virtue of our Baptism, even children can 'go out' and bring the Good News of Jesus to others with their artwork. So encourage them to share their art with as many people as possible, so that they are, in effect, doing missionary work!

## (1) EL SALVADOR

The Nativity is made of wood and is painted with bright colours. Notice that Jesus seems to be older as He is standing on His own two feet. There are animals in the background and a dove to the right. The dove may symbolise the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed Mary and caused Her to conceive Jesus. Notice the buildings on the left and the triangle in the centre have terracotta roof. This is common in El Salvador. There are mountains in the background in all sections, which are also common there.

## (2) THE HOLY LAND

This Nativity is clearly made of wood. Notice that it has no paint or colour of any kind. It shows the Holy Family accompanied by the shepherds and sheep. There is a palm tree on the left, common in Bethlehem yesterday and today. The palm leaves were used on Palm Sunday to welcome Jesus to Jerusalem. The star above the stable is on the move, perhaps signaling for the wise men (Magi). The lack of colour perhaps speaks to the poverty and simplicity in which Jesus was born.

## (3) KENYA

This Nativity is made of ebony wood, naturally a dark brown colour. It is carved out of one solid piece. Notice that Mary and Joseph are on the left, the three kings are on the top right, and the shepherds and sheep/animals kneel on the bottom right. Jesus lays somewhere in the middle. The figures all have long faces, with long noses. The color of the wood likely is similar to the colouring of the Kenyan people's features. In this way, the Nativity depicts the family of people present at the birth, family of the Kenyan people as well. They are all held close together, connected, by the birth of Jesus.

## (4) INDONESIA

This Nativity is very lightweight, it is made of wood. The designs on their robes are detailed and colourful. Notice that Mary and Joseph have very light skin colour and their hair is very dark. The colouring of their robes and their features are common in Indonesia. These figures do not come with a building, perhaps because they depict the Holy Family on the move. In the scriptures we hear about the flight to Egypt. This set shows us how they had no safe home, similar to the experiences of many in Indonesia who are refugees.

## (5) UGANDA

This Nativity is made of paper and grass fibres. It is designed to look like a traditional grass thatched hut, common in Uganda. The figures are simply made and have dark features. There is a large buffalo on the left side of the hut, resting near the Christ Child. The shepherds are kneeling, while Mary and Joseph look on behind. This is a very simple design, and there are simple colours used. This set seems to speak of the common people of Uganda that their simple living is like that of the Holy Family.

## (6) ITALY

This is probably a familiar looking set. This is made of plastic, painted with an older, more traditional, rugged look. The set includes the Holy Family and two shepherds (notice one shepherd is a boy and the other a girl). In this set the Baby Jesus can be removed so you can wait until Christmas day to place Him in the manger. Mary and Joseph seem to be focused on the baby, while the shepherds look to the skies. Italy is where the Vatican is, the seat of the Holy Father. This set speaks to the ancient traditions of the Catholic Church.

## (7) PERU

This Nativity is again made of a lightweight wood. It is very colourful and has doors that open and close. It shows a gathering of many people and animals. Notice that the Holy Family is shown up above the others and they all have halos. The angel above must have called them all together, especially the shepherds. The shepherds and Magi seem to be kneeling and praying as they surround the Christ Child. This set calls to mind a chaotic scene where everyone wants to see the baby. The bright colours speak to life's vibrancy

