

Waiting for the Messiah

In *Waiting for the Messiah* students identify Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah. Students examine both the Old and New Testaments to make connections between prophecy and fulfilment. They explore the role of Mary in the Christmas tradition as disciple and mother. At the conclusion of the unit students reflect on the message of Christmas for Christians.

DOCTRINAL OVERVIEW

In planning to teach this unit the following references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are recommended:

#453 The title 'Christ' means 'Anointed One' (Messiah). Jesus is the Christ, for 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power' (Acts 10: 38). He was the one 'who is to come' (Lk 7: 19), the object of 'the hope of Israel' (Acts 28: 20). (See *Compendium #82 Why is Jesus called 'Christ'?*)

#712 The characteristics of the awaited *Messiah* begin to appear in the 'Book of Emmanuel' ('Isaiah said this when he saw his glory', speaking of Christ), especially in the first two verses of Isaiah 11:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

#524 When the Church celebrates *the liturgy of Advent* each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour's first coming the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming. (See *Compendium #102 How did God prepare the world for the mystery of Christ?*)

#437 To the shepherds, the angel announced the birth of Jesus as the Messiah promised to Israel: 'To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord'. (See *Compendium #103 What does the gospel teach us about the mysteries of the birth and infancy of Christ?*)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

Mary's *Magnificat* in Luke's Gospel proclaims the powerful being dethroned, the lowly exalted, the hungry filled and the rich sent away empty. Mary speaks out on behalf of her people Israel, who long for salvation and hope. Discipleship in Luke's Gospel involves challenging structures that are unjust and oppressive. In Advent how can you and the school community also be a voice for justice and the common good?

The shepherds, the poor and marginalised of their time, are the first to hear and believe the annunciation of the birth of the saviour in Luke's Gospel. Their response is

to act – to go in haste to this saviour who will bring peace on earth. Discerning the word of God and acting on it are characteristics of discipleship in Luke’s Gospel.

How do you see this way of discipleship in your own life? How can you nurture this way of living in your students? Who are the students, staff and families on the margin in your school community? What can they teach you about being faithful to God’s Word?

Jesus Christ’s family tree (Mt 1: 1–16) includes the names of four women who are connected to Gentiles and for whom there has been sexual impropriety or mistreatment. Jesus’ ancestry foreshadows a Messiah open to the world of Gentiles and the unclean. Consider your own life story or your family tree. What are the traces of God’s grace and salvation in your own life and that of your family?

LINKS WITH STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES

Students are developing a deeper understanding of the nature and significance of symbol. They are becoming more familiar with the symbols of the Christmas season. *Are there students from other churches and Christian communities in your class? What understandings and practices of Christmas will they bring to this unit?*

Discipleship begins with recognising the needs of others and responding in an appropriate way. *What opportunities are students given to respond to those in need? What are the messages in today’s world that compete for your students’ attention?*

Prophets are people who call us back into right relationship with God by speaking out against evil, injustice, corruption and violence. *Who are the people who show your students how to live in right relationship with God?*

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Lk 2: 9–14 The Birth of Jesus Christ and the Visit of the Shepherds

In a field near Bethlehem a group of shepherds was the first to be told the news of the birth of the Messiah. God’s gift of the Messiah is for all humanity. It carries the message of God’s desire to be in relationship with all people. Status is not important to God. Shepherds were very poor and regarded as living on the fringe of society at this time. But it is to these ‘little ones’ that the good news of the Incarnation (the Word made flesh) is first revealed; good news of peace, justice and freedom.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Mary

- Prepare an environment for prayer in the classroom. Arrange blue and white cloths (the Church’s traditional colours for Mary). Display a large icon of Mary, or a collage of images of Mary from different cultural traditions.
- Celebrate a Marian prayer service. The resource *Follow the Star – Music Book and Prayers and Resources* (Michael Mangan, Litmus Productions) – may be helpful.
- Lead students in a guided reflection on the Annunciation (Lk 1: 26–38) or the story of Mary visiting Elizabeth (Lk 1: 39–45). Ask them to imagine Mary’s and/or

Elizabeth's thoughts and feelings. Conclude by singing or reciting a version of *The Magnificat* (Lk 1: 46–55).

- Leading up to Advent, learn to pray *The Angelus*. Traditionally, it is prayed as church bells ring at 6.00 am, 12.00 noon and 6.00 pm each day.

Advent

- Set up the prayer space in the colours of Advent. Include an Advent wreath and a 'Giving Tree'. Attach decorations to the tree with suggestions on how the students can be mindful of those in need at Christmas.
- Closer to Christmas, prepare a prayer celebration incorporating a rite of gift-giving for families and/or individuals in need.
- At morning prayer each day follow the students' petitions with a response from 'Our Prayer' in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 5, Chapter 19, p. 189.
- Plan and prepare a liturgy during which figures will be placed in a Nativity scene, with an appropriate prayer written by the students, for each 'character' in the scene. This may be accompanied by reflective music or the singing of Christmas carols.

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 5: Chapter 18, Mary Our Mother; Chapter 19, We Celebrate Advent and Christmas.

Faith concepts: signs, symbols, discipleship, seasons, prophet, Messiah.

Seeking understanding:

Who is the Messiah?

What kind of Messiah were the people of Israel waiting for?

Why are Advent and Christmas important seasons for Christians?

Understandings:

The Messiah’s birth was prophesied in the Old Testament

The people of Israel waited for the birth of a Messiah.

Christians believe Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the anointed one of God.

Mary lived a life of faithful discipleship which is a model for all Christians.

Christians honour Mary’s life through special devotions.

Scripture Text: Lk 2: 9–14

Unit specific learning:

| Students will learn about | Students will learn to | Students will undertake to |
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| <i>Knowledge and Understanding</i> | <i>Reasoning & Responding</i> | <i>Personal & Communal Engagement</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meaning of the word <i>Messiah</i>. • The prophecies of the Messiah’s birth. • How the people of Israel waited for the birth of a Messiah. • The role of the prophet in the Old Testament. • Why Christians believe Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah. • Mary’s faithfulness and obedience as a model of discipleship for all Christians. • How Christians honour Mary’s life through special devotions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make connections between scriptural prophecies and Jesus Christ’s fulfilment of them in the Christian tradition. • Reflect on their new understanding of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. • Challenge themselves to consider how they can live as prophet and disciple. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead classroom prayer based on the Advent themes of hope, joy and prophetic living. • Plan, lead and evaluate a Christmas liturgy. |

PHASES OF STUDENT INQUIRY

| Additional Reading for Teachers | Orientation to Inquiry <i>What do students already know, think or feel in relation to the topic? What are students' questions about the topic? What experiences and reflections can we offer students to become engaged with the topic?</i> | Assessment: for learning as learning of learning |
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| <p>Advent is not about passive waiting. It is an active time of waiting during which Christians are invited to be prophetic and responsive to God's Spirit in their lives. It is a time in which Christians live in joy and hope for God's reign to be fulfilled.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gallery of Hope and Joy Display photos of people of hope and joy such as Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, School Principal, Fred Hollows, Martin Luther King, Trish Broadbridge. Alternatively use a Photolanguage Kit. Ask students to identify an image or person of hope and joy. In pairs discuss their choices then share reflections with the whole class. Discuss the times students or their families have experienced joy and hope. Set the classroom prayer space for Advent with purple cloth and images and texts of hope and joy. During Advent invite students to lead classroom prayer based on Advent themes of hope, joy and prophetic living. | |
| <p>Prophets in ancient Israel were public figures</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Me, a prophet! | |

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| <p>who were concerned with the fate of the people of Israel and their relationship with God. They often called attention to the social implications of the people's relationship with God, such as concern for the poor and marginalised and the causes of injustice (Ryan, 2001).</p> | <p>To provide a sense of the role of the prophet invite students to analyse a social issue cooperatively.</p> <p>Pose a moral or social problem, e.g. How should the community deal with students who graffiti property? Is it ok to spend all my leisure time on the internet? Is it ok to select only the best players for the school netball team?</p> <p>Divide students into groups of three.</p> <p>Each group works out 4 possible options or responses and the reasons for their ideas.</p> <p>They write the 4 responses on cards and order them from most preferred/important to least preferred/important option or response.</p> <p>Use the highest ranking card from each group and make a class list.</p> <p>Ask students to identify which options build up relationships between people and with God, are just, and hope-filled. Which options show a concern for marginalised people?</p> <p>As a whole class discuss and arrange the cards in preferred order based on the option that leads to a sense of hope and justice.</p> <p>Reflection: Ask students to write a</p> | |
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| | <p>personal response to the issue justifying their opinion and the reason for their response.</p> | |
| <p>What kind of Messiah did the Jews expect? When reviewing the history of the Jews we see that they were oppressed by many people: Egyptians, Canaanites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Ptolemies, Seleucids and Romans. With this kind of oppression it is not surprising that they hoped for someone to lead them to better times, to salvation from their enemies.</p> <p>Messianism was an idea that grew, developed and changed during the long history of Judaism. It included the expectation of salvation in general, the expectation of a new era, and the coming of an individual messiah who would save his people. During the Isaiahian period the vision of a new people and a new kingdom began to take shape. In Deutero-Isaiah it is further refined, the world will change and Israel will be called upon to be a light to the world. The figure of the Messiah, although still a king, would also be the suffering servant (Goosen, G & Tomlinson, N <i>Studying the Gospels: An Introduction</i>).</p> <p>The prophets were inspired social commentators and critics, whose aim was to remind the Jewish people of the covenant they have with God, and of the personal and group responsibility they have to live a</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keyword – Brainstorm Brainstorm students' understanding of the following words: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Messiah – Prophet – Disciple <p>Display the list so that it can be referred to during the unit. Students can self-correct the brainstorm throughout the unit as it is challenged with new learning.</p> | <p>Assessment for/as Learning</p> <p>These initial brainstorms will indicate the understandings, perceptions and experiences students bring to this unit. At this stage do not correct or fill the gaps in students' knowledge. The learning throughout the unit will affirm, deepen or challenge the understanding students bring to the unit.</p> |

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| <p>'Torah' life. They have been called radical traditionalists. They are so called because they proclaim the future consequences of the present actions, and in doing so, call on people to alter their behaviour so that impending disaster can be averted. The main theological theme of the Prophetic books is sin, repentance and return to God. The prophets often focused on social sin where the needs of the oppressed and the poor were violated, e.g. Isa 58: 6–7 (Glazier, M & Hellwig, MK (Ed) 1994, <i>The Modern Catholic Encyclopaedia</i>).</p> <p>In Luke's Gospel disciples are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.</p> | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence starters – pre-assessment Students respond to the following sentence starters, then revisit them at the end of the unit to monitor changes in their learning/understanding. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Advent is about ... – Christmas is important because ... – Christmas wouldn't be the same if ... – Jesus is an important part of Christmas because ... – Jesus is the Messiah for Christians because ... | <p>Assessment for/as Learning These initial brainstorms will indicate the understandings, perceptions and experiences students bring to this unit. At this stage do not correct or fill the gaps in students' knowledge. The learning throughout the unit will affirm, deepen or challenge the understanding students bring to the unit.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Development <i>What experiences and religious texts will provide new learning for students? What skills will students need in order to work with these resources? What strategies</i></p> | | |

| | <i>and tools will enable students to think and reflect on these experiences and texts? How will students process their thinking and learning?</i> | |
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| <p>Messiah: The word Christ means anointed one and comes from the Greek language. The Hebrew word Messiah has the same meaning.</p> <p>In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as fulfilling God's plan— he is the long-awaited Messiah. Christians believe that Jesus fulfils the hopes of all people.</p> <p>God promised King David that a descendant of his would be Messiah (2 Sam 7: 12–13). Isaiah tells of the time of the Messiah in his great prophecy (Isa 9: 2–7).</p> <p>A prophecy is not the same as telling the future. Prophets were people who spoke to the people in God's name. Examples of prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and Micah.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messiah Immersion Set up the following learning centres encouraging students to find out all they can about the word Messiah. (1) Definitions – place a number of definitions of the word Messiah onto card, e.g. from a Catholic dictionary, standard dictionary, bible dictionary, teacher notes and additional reading provided in this unit, internet source. (2) Scripture Search – Display the following two quotes from the bible on card. Matthew 1: 18–24; 2: 1–12 Luke 3: 1–17 (3) Images – collect internet images depicting the 'Messiah'. The website www.textweek.com/ may be useful. On a data chart, students record words to describe the Messiah. What qualities are depicted in this text? What images are used to depict the Messiah. | |
| <p>Isaiah is a prophet. Isa 11: 1–9 prophesies the coming Messiah. The reference is to a 'branch', meaning a branch in the family tree. Jesse was the father of King David. The Messiah was to be born from David's branch of the family tree. The text envisions a time</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiting for the Messiah: the Prophet Isaiah Isa 11: 1–9 Context this story by giving the students a brief description of what life was like for the Israelite people at this | |

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| <p>of peace, <i>shalom</i>, when everyone, even the animals, will be at peace together, and everyone in the world will know God. At the time of the writing of this text it is probable that the Israelite people were in exile in Babylon, a time of despair and darkness throughout which they longed for peace, harmony, their own leader and their own homeland. The Messiah is associated with peace, harmony, self-determination, hope and justice. This is reflected in the imagery of the text.</p> | <p>time (see teacher's notes in the left column).</p> <p>Proclaim the text to students . Ask them to name wondering questions. Explore these questions in a class discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think Pad Divide the students into 3 groups and present each group with copies of one of the following sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Isaiah 11: 1–3a – Isaiah 11: 3b–5 – Isaiah 11: 6–9 <p>In pairs, students divide their page/paper into four squares. These are headed 'Words', 'Symbols', 'Pictures', 'Thinking'. They record the message or meaning of the text in two or three sentences; they use symbols to illustrate the meaning of the text; they create one or more pictures that retell the text; they write what they think this text tells them about the 'Messiah' (see White, D, <i>Into the Deep</i>, p. 82).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking for the Messiah in Our World Classroom or small group discussion: Where do students see peace, harmony, hope and justice in their personal world or the global world? | <p>Assessment of Learning The Think Pad will demonstrate students' understanding and interpretation of the Isaiah text and the significance of the Messiah for the people of Israel.</p> <p>Assessment of Learning This task will allow students to demonstrate how they interpret signs of God's peace, hope and justice in their own personal or global worlds.</p> |
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| | Are these signs of the Messiah in our world? | | | | | | | |
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| <p>Like those in Isaiah’s time and those of the Jesse tree, Mary was part of the Israelite people who waited for their Messiah. She was chosen to be the mother of the Messiah, the Mother of God. A title for Mary is Queen because she is the Queen Mother of the Messianic King.</p> <p>In saying ‘yes’ at the Annunciation, Mary showed her whole-hearted trust and confidence in God. She is the first and best of Jesus Christ’s disciples.</p> <p>Scripture is an important basis for our understanding of Mary. In Mark there are only passing references to Mary; her presence provides Jesus with a context for expanding his followers’ understanding of discipleship. In Luke she is a prophet who announces the coming reign of God. She is shown as a model of all the things a follower of Jesus Christ ought to be. In Matthew we see Mary in a vulnerable position; her pregnancy may bring her family into dishonour. In John, Mary is referred to as ‘The Woman’ and present in two stories, the marriage at Cana and at the Crucifixion. In the first, she is the means by which Jesus Christ commences his ministry.</p> <p>The Church honours Mary as Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. The Council of Ephesus in AD 431 declared that Mary is</p> | <p>• Mary: brave disciple Students watch a video of Mary’s story (Christmas story) to enable them to re-visit and reflect on her role. Students share their wonderings (I wonder what would have happened if Mary said, ‘No!’) and discuss Mary’s role as a faithful disciple:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Who was Mary? – What choices did she face? – What were the consequences of her decisions? <p>Use a T-chart to allow children to ponder and record their reflections on this story.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="826 895 1413 1273"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="826 895 1039 932">I see ...</th> <th data-bbox="1039 895 1225 932">I feel ...</th> <th data-bbox="1225 895 1413 932">I think ...</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="826 932 1039 1273"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a young girl – a girl who listens to God </td> <td data-bbox="1039 932 1225 1273"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – sorry for Mary in that her life was completely changed – happy for Mary as she is a special woman </td> <td data-bbox="1225 932 1413 1273"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mary is very courageous – God must have known Mary was a special person </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | I see ... | I feel ... | I think ... | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a young girl – a girl who listens to God | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – sorry for Mary in that her life was completely changed – happy for Mary as she is a special woman | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mary is very courageous – God must have known Mary was a special person | |
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| <p><i>theotokos</i> (God-bearer) – Mother of God. The titles of Mary indicate hopes and expectations in prayers to her. The traditional Litany of Mary promotes particular virtues as ideal for womanhood.</p> <p>The main feast days of Mary are: Immaculate Conception (8 December); Mary, Mother of God (1 January); the Annunciation (25 March); the Birthday of Mary (8 September); Our Lady Help of Christians (24 May); the Assumption (15 August).</p> | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiting for the Messiah: Mary Lk 1: 26–38 – The Annunciation <p>Share this text with the students through dramatisation, song or oral retell. To support students to ponder and explore this story further for themselves invite them to respond to the following question. ‘What would Mary have texted, emailed or written in a diary after this event?’</p> | |
| <p>The Scriptures announced that a Messiah (God’s <i>anointed</i> one) would come. Christ in Greek, Messiah in Hebrew, means anointed one. Jesus is the Christ because he is consecrated by God and anointed by the Holy Spirit for his redeeming mission. He is the Messiah awaited by Israel, sent into the world by the Father. From the name Christ comes our name Christian (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Story of Christmas Share Luke’s version of the story of Christmas with concrete materials or dramatisation. <p>Pose wonderings to students, e.g. I wonder if this sounds/looks like the birth of a Messiah? I wonder if Mary or Joseph knew that their baby was the Messiah? I wonder why the birth of this ‘Messiah’ didn’t take place in a palace or in a grand way?</p> | <p>Assessment of Learning This activity assesses students’ ability to identify an event in Jesus’ life that they recognise as being Messianic.</p> |

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| | <p>Discuss with the students how we know today that Jesus was/is the Messiah. How do we know this? How did Jesus, the Messiah bring peace and harmony?</p> <p>Students record in their journals an episode when Jesus Christ showed he was the Messiah – the fulfilment of the prophecy.</p> | |
| | <p style="text-align: center;">SYNTHESIS</p> <p><i>How will students demonstrate their understandings, beliefs, values, skills and feelings in relation to the topic? How will students take action based on their learning? What strategies and tools will enable students to discern their action, to plan and implement action and to evaluate their action?</i></p> | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection – sentence starters Have students revisit their responses to the sentence starters. How have their responses to the statements changed since the beginning of the unit? How does knowing this affect their view of Christmas? Students record their responses. | <p>Assessment as/of Learning Assessment identifying changes in students' understandings.</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Christmas Capers Students choose to express their learning through this unit in the following ways: (1) Christmas Card – set up a template for a Christmas card with the following text on the front 'To you is born this day the Messiah'. Students illustrate the front and write an | <p>Assessment of Learning These tasks will enable students to demonstrate their understanding and interpretation of Jesus Christ as Messiah and the significance of this for the Advent and Christmas seasons.</p> |

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| | <p>appropriate message on the inside.</p> <p>(2) Messiah banner – using a variety of media, students present the word ‘Messiah’ in a way that captures the qualities of the Messiah, i.e. word shape, colour, texture, etc.</p> <p>(3) Poetry – students express their understanding of Messiah in the form of a cinquain.</p> <p>Students may need to write a short explanation of their creative pieces to assist in identifying what understandings/thinking each is expressing.</p> | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christmas Liturgy Students plan, lead and evaluate a Christmas liturgy that celebrates the birth of the Messiah. Students use readings, images and reflections explored in the unit. | |

RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Year 5: Chapter 18, Mary Our Mother; Chapter 19, We Celebrate Advent and Christmas.

Teacher Resources

Goosen, G & Tomlinson, N 1994, *Studying the Gospels: An Introduction*, EJ Dwyer (Australia) Pty Ltd.
 Glazier M & Hellwig, MK (Ed) 1994, *The Modern Catholic Encyclopaedia*, EJ Dwyer (Australia) Pty Ltd.
 McCaughrean, G 2003, *The Jesse Tree*, Lion Publishing, Oxford.
 Toritto, J 1990, *Exploring the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, Saint Mary’s Press, Minnesota.
 Ryan, M 2001, *Teaching the Bible*, Social Science Press, Australia.
 White, D, O’Brien, K & Todd, S 2003, *Into the Deep*, KD Publications, NSW.

DVDs, Video, CD ROMs

The Visual Bible, Video. (Summary: This video wonderfully captures the humble birth of our Lord Jesus. It is acted word for word from Matthew's Gospel from the NIV Bible text. Running Time: 30 minutes.)

Christmas Pageant, Video, Jim Cosgrove.

CDs

Newman, D J 2000, *Jesse Tree: Advent Song and Paraliturgies For Children*, GIA Publishing.

(Summary: The song is intended to be used along with the presentation of symbols, which are placed on the Jesse Tree by the children.)

Burland, J 2003, *Christmas Star*, Ovation Music Services.

Burland, J, 1998, *Let's Celebrate*, Ovation Music Services.

Michael M, 1999, *Follow the Star*, Litmus Publishing.

Websites

Waiting for the Messiah (This unit includes the meaning of Messiah.)

<http://www.ceo.hobart.catholic.edu.au/faith_education/resource_banks/level_4/L4-The%20Birth%20of%20Jesus.pdf>

Mary as a disciple

<<http://www.udayton.edu/mary/meditations/brennan.html>

<<http://www.goodgroundpress.com/index.asp?PageAction=Custom&ID=76>

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/May1997/Feature2.as>>

Mary's Feast days and devotions

<www.goddess.ws/mother_mary.html www.sabmiguelduide.com/virgin_of_guadalupe.html>

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 4 standards.

Students analyse and reflect on scripture texts and stories in Church Tradition to inform actions, attitudes and values.