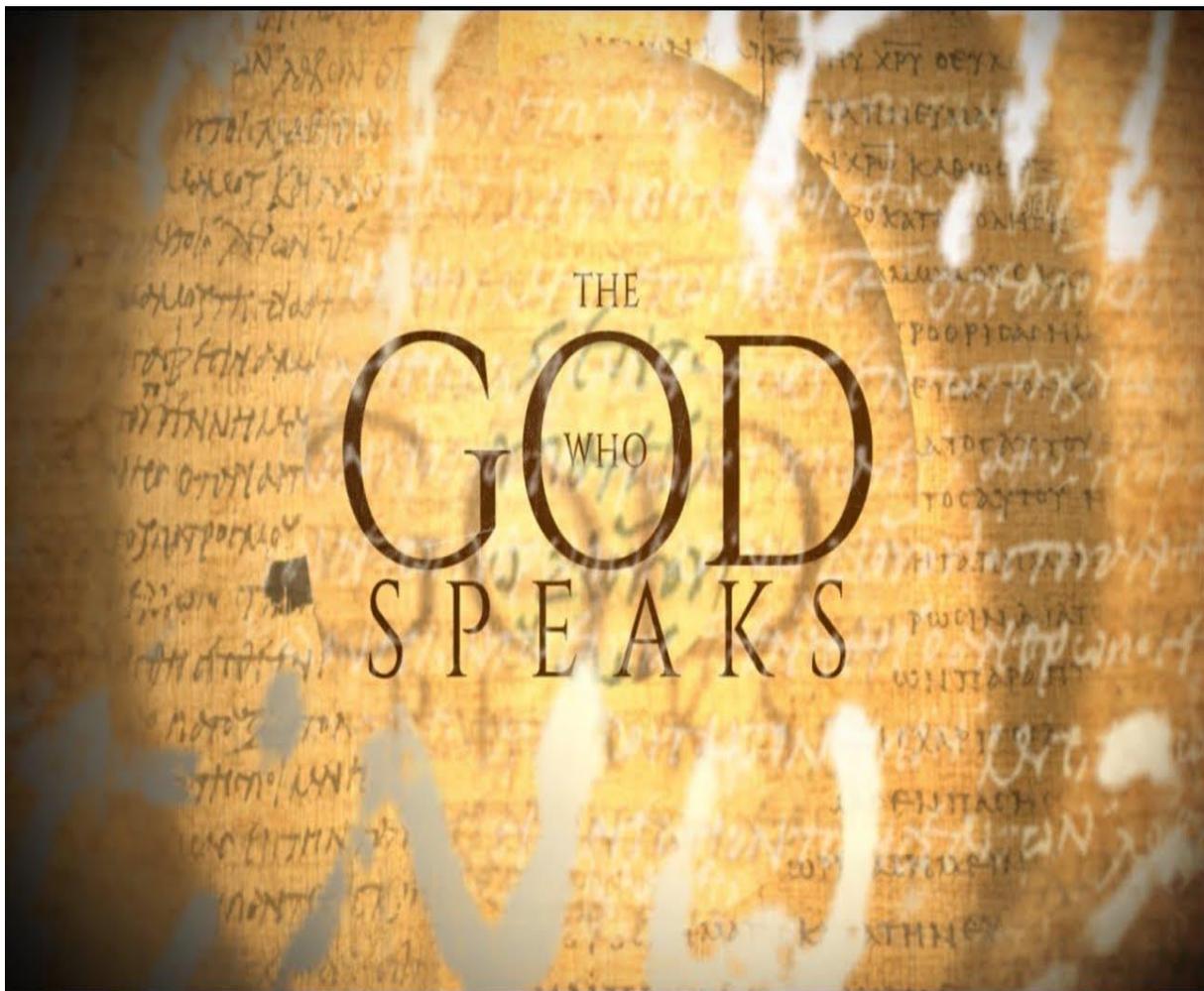




A FUTURE
FULL OF HOPE



Session Four

The Infancy Stories

Opening Prayer

Living God,
you walk alongside us
and speak to us throughout the Scriptures.
Your Son, Jesus Christ, listens to our hopes and fears
and shows us how to live for one another.
Send us the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds
so that we may be your witnesses throughout the world. Amen

V. Your word is our path and your truth is our light.
R. This day and every day.

Our Lady of the Annunciation
Pray for us

St Matthew
Pray for us

St Jerome
Pray for us

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

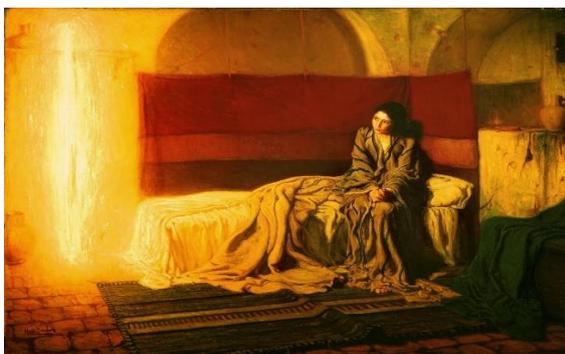
which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Words of Pope Francis

From ADMIRABILE SIGNUM on the meaning and importance of the Nativity scene.

The presence of the poor and the lowly in the nativity scene remind us that God became man for the sake of those who feel most in need of his love and who ask him to draw near to them. Jesus, “gentle and humble in heart” (Mt 11:29), was born in poverty and led a simple life in order to teach us to recognize what is essential and to act accordingly. The nativity scene clearly teaches that we cannot let ourselves be fooled by wealth and fleeting promises of happiness. We see Herod’s palace in the background, closed and deaf to the tidings of joy. By being born in a manger, God himself launches the only true revolution that can give hope and dignity to the disinherited and the outcast: the revolution of love, the revolution of tenderness. From the manger, Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no one is excluded or marginalized.

Art of the Annunciation



Reflection Fr. Henry Wandsbrough OSB

*The reflection from Fr. Henry is available to download from cliftondiocese.com
Play the video clip [here](#).*

Questions for Conversation

Which of the Infancy stories matters to you most?

What surprises you most about Fr. Henry's commentaries on the Infancy stories?

Describe your favourite picture of the Annunciation. Why is it your favourite?

Does it matter that Matthew was written primarily for Jewish Christians?

What can you do to escape the dangers of wealth and possessions?

What are the basic lessons which we learn from the Christmas story?

Re-read the Scripture passage for this session. You may like to follow the reading with a time of prayer and intercession after which you might pray the **OUR FATHER**

Final Prayer

Pilgrim God,
you walk alongside us
and speak to us throughout the Scriptures:
in the message of the prophets,
the songs of David
and the vision of Paul.
Your Son, Jesus Christ, listens to our hopes and fears
and shows us how to live:
in our love of neighbour
our desire for justice,
and in our dying and rising each day.
Send us the Holy Spirit to open our hearts
and minds
so that we may be your witnesses
throughout the world:
in our protection of the vulnerable,
our words and actions
and in our communion with the earth.

