

St John's Christmas Play 2002

Welcome and introduction

Carol: O come all ye faithful

Welcome from Vicar, and prayer

Presents brought to the tree at this point

Scene 1: Mary's introduction

The initial setting is a modern day Christmas party (on stage). Two partygoers are at the front of the stage chatting – drink in hand

Partygoer 1 Cheers – Happy Christmas. Another year another Christmas!

After all the rush this is what it's about – a good party, presents, (*raising his/her glass*) Christmas cheer.

Partygoer 2 Yes it's a magical time – particularly for the children. It's what dreams are made of!

Mary N appears in the pulpit (as she speaks the partygoers stand still/fade away but do not look at or acknowledge Mary N)

Mary N I was once a young girl, with all the dreams that any other young girl might have: to meet my prince charming, to have lovely children, and a nice home. You might say that my dream came true. However, my life has been nothing like my dream. You could say that my dream was shattered when my husband died. I was still young, and my family was growing up. At least we weren't poor, because by then my elder sons could take over the family business. But this wasn't really when my dream ended. In fact, you could say that my dream changed before any of it became true.

I'm sorry; I forgot to tell you who I am. My name is Mary. My husband was called Joseph, and he ran a woodworking company. It makes furniture and helps build houses. I would look after the accounts. There is a lot of business going at the moment. We lived in Nazareth, and the Romans are building a new town nearby called Sepphoris; a bit like Milton Keynes really. They need all the craftsmen they can find.

But for the last three years our lives have been quite turned upside down. Here we are in Jerusalem. You won't believe what has happened to us all. I don't really know where to start.

My eldest son, Jesus, was doing well running our business, but three years ago he left us and started travelling around telling people about God. Okay, a lot of people do this, but he was very different. He could pray to God for people to be healed, and they were. Once we were at a party when they ran out of wine, and he prayed for God to turn water into wine, and it happened. Best wine in the town apparently. But the leaders hated him, like really hated him. And in the end they arrested him as if he was a criminal, and put him to death on a cross. I thought that was the end of our world. But two days later, on the Sunday, he came back to life again. It wasn't as if he had simply been unconscious and had woken up. No, all his wounds were healed. He was back to life, yet in a completely new way. You see, he was not just a man; he was truly the Son of God.

So what about my dream? Jesus was once a little baby, a gorgeous little baby, really lovely, very cuddly. But even then we knew he was special. Let me tell you about him.

Carol: Silent night, holy night

Scene 2: The temple

The scene is the temple, with people coming to pray, and Anna and Simeon talking with people.

Mary N Not long after Jesus was born, we took him to the temple as was our custom. We were not used to the temple at all.

Joseph and Mary come into the temple, with a baby and looking lost. Joseph asks someone for help.

Joseph Excuse me please, can you tell us where we can find a priest?

Person Over there – that old chap.

Joseph Thanks.

Person My, you have a lovely baby.

Mary Thank you. We have brought him here for a blessing.

Person I wish you well.

Simeon turns to see Mary and Joseph.

Simeon Have you brought your baby to be blessed?

Joseph Yes we have. I am Joseph, and this is my wife Mary.

Simeon He is a lovely baby. What is his name?

Mary We are calling him Jesus.

Simeon Please let me hold him.

Simeon takes the baby in his arms.

Simeon You know that this is a very special baby. God told me that one day I would see your baby.

Simeon looks up in prayer.

Simeon Lord, as you promised, I have now seen the one you have given to be our salvation, the one you have given as a light to all nations, and to be the glory to your people Israel. I praise you Lord.

Simeon hands the baby back to Mary.

Mary Can you tell us what you meant in your prayer?

Simeon As I said, God once told me that I would not die until I had seen the Messiah. Your child is our Messiah. He will be God's sign to our people, and many will rise and fall because of him.

Simeon turns especially to Mary and puts his hands on her shoulder.

Simeon And Mary, all I can say is that it will be as if a sword will pierce your heart.

Simeon looks up and sees Anna walking towards them.

Anna Is this he, the Messiah we have been expecting?

Simeon It is he.

Anna Thanks be to God.

Anna turns to the audience.

Anna This child is the one who God has given to be our redeemer. God has remembered his promises to us. God is to be praised.

Mary N We were shaken, but not surprised. It wasn't the first time we had been told this.

Carol: Angels from the realms of glory

Scene 3: The stable with the kings

The scene is a stable.

Mary N When Jesus was born, we were in Bethlehem. The Romans had some rule about registering for tax, and because Joseph's family came from Bethlehem that was where we had to go. When we arrived the place was full, and the only room we could find was one we had to share with some animals. But it was warm enough, and we could make it comfortable. That was where Jesus was born, and we wrapped him up and let him sleep in a manger.

What was astonishing was that we were visited by some rich travellers, who had come from a long way away.

Mary is sitting, Joseph is busy, there is a knock at the door and in come the Kings. Mary is astonished and calls to Joseph.

Mary Joseph, there are some people coming to see us.

Joseph looks up and quickly stands by Mary.

Joseph Who are you? What do you want here?

King 1 I am sorry, we do not mean to worry you.

King 2 But we have been following a star, and it has stopped over this place.

King 3 We have been travelling a long way. We have come to look for a new-born king.

King 1 The stars have told us that a new king has been born, one who is to be King of the Jews.

King 2 And we have come to worship him.

King 3 See, we have brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

The kings present their gifts. Mary then picks up the baby and shows him to the kings.

King 1 Does he have a name?

Mary He is called Jesus.

Joseph Tell us about your journey.

The kings step forward.

King 1 We come from the East. In our religion we look at the stars, and we understood that we should come to look for a new king.

King 2 We didn't know where to go, but we followed a star.

King 3 It brought us to Israel, and we found ourselves in Jerusalem. We went to the palace of your king.

King 1 Man, he was a mean creature. We didn't expect to meet him, and we wish we hadn't.

Herod comes in and sits down, with his advisors. The kings stand in front.

Herod So you are looking for a king. Well, I am the king, but you are too late for my birth! Where are you looking?

King 2 We don't know; we have been following a star, and we have arrived here in Jerusalem.

Herod Perhaps my trusted advisors can help.

Herod clicks his fingers, and one advisor steps forward.

Advisor Well, King Herod, according to the scriptures, a king will be born in Bethlehem, of the line of King David.

Herod Well, there you have it, you should look in Bethlehem. And if you find a new-born king, come back and tell me so that I can worship him too. Now go, and be quick.

Kings shuffle back towards Mary and Joseph

King 3 And so we came to Bethlehem as quickly as we could.

Joseph It is now late. You don't want to be heading back to Jerusalem now. Please stay the night.

They all fall asleep. An angel then appears, and first talks to the Kings who are sitting up.

Angel You are not to return to Herod. He only means to harm the baby. Flee quickly before his men come to look for you, and do not go back the same way you came.

The Kings stand up and leave together.

The angel then talks to Joseph, who also sits up

Angel Joseph, you are to leave tonight with Mary and Jesus. It is not safe. Herod will soon come to look for the baby.

Joseph wakes up Mary, then gather up their things, pick up Jesus, and leave.

Mary N So we left that night. Our visitors had shown us that Jesus would indeed be a king, but not in the way that Herod had thought.

Carol: See admit the winter's snow

Scene 4: The stable with the shepherds

The scene is a stable.

Mary N The royal visitors had not been our first guests that night. Our first guests were completely different, but in their way just as special.

Mary is sitting, Joseph is busy, there is a knock at the door and in come the Kings. Mary is astonished and calls to Joseph.

Mary Joseph, there are some people coming to see us.

Joseph looks up and quickly stands by Mary.

Joseph Who are you? What do you want here?

Shepherd 1 I am sorry, we do not mean to worry you.

Shepherd 2 We have come to worship.

The shepherds kneel and present their lambs

Shepherd 3 Does your baby have a name?

Mary His name is Jesus.

Joseph How did you come to find us?

Shepherd 1 We were in the fields looking after our sheep. Suddenly there were some angels ahead of us.

The shepherds move over to sit down on the stage. They look to be warming themselves and chatting. Suddenly the angels rush in from the back and come onto the stage. The shepherds fall to the floor.

Angel Do not be afraid, we have good news for you. Today in Bethlehem a saviour has been born, who is Christ the Lord. You will find him wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Glory to God in the highest.

Song: Jesus is the name we honour

Shepherds move back to Joseph and Mary.

Shepherd 2 So we came to you as quickly as we could.

Shepherd 3 And now we can praise God, because we have seen the saviour.

Song: Tonight (Glory to God)

Scene 5: A quiet room

The scene is a quiet room with only Mary

Mary N So we had met Simeon the priest and Anna the prophetess, the kings and the shepherds. They all told us that Jesus was to be God's Messiah, the saviour of the world. We were amazed by all this, but not surprised. In some ways we were expecting this.

Joseph comes onto the stage and sits next to Mary.

Mary Joseph, tell us why we knew that Jesus was God's special child.

Joseph Mary and I were engaged to be married. Like Mary, I had a dream of a happy life together, with some children one day, and I wanted to see my woodworking company do well. I reckoned I would be able to provide for my family. I would be a good father.

Mary As indeed you were.

Joseph Well, one day I was shocked when Mary came to see me. She said that she was already expecting a child. Initially I was shocked, and I didn't really hear what she was saying. She said something about an angel visiting her, but I was so upset I couldn't think straight. I didn't want to cause any trouble, so I thought that I would quietly dissolve our engagement. But the same night when I was asleep I had a dream.

Joseph lies down in bed. An angel visits him and he sits up

Angel Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The baby she is carrying is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

Mary N So Joseph then understood what I had been telling him. He saw the same angel who had visited me earlier, and who had told me that our baby was to be the Son of God.

Mary God is to be praised because he has done great things for us.

Mary N His mercy is for all. He has cast down the proud, and lifted up the poor and humble.

Mary He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent away empty.

Mary N He has helped His servant Israel; He has remembered to be merciful to His people, just as He had said to our fathers.
Both Marys Praise God for his most wonderful gift of all in giving us his son.

Song: King of kings, majesty

Vicar to give appropriate summary of the Christmas message, to lead a closing prayer, and to give a final blessing

Carol: Hark, the herald angels sing