

# A Very Special Birthday

A Christmas meditation

## Preparation

- Have the children investigate the story of their own birth and early days of life. Focus on such details as:

- where they were born;

- who was present at the birth;

- who came to visit; and

- any specifically happy, traumatic, or anxious moments surrounding the event which are still remembered today by parents or family members.

- Prior to the prayer time, share some of these stories.

- Gather the children around a prayer mat/table on which is placed a Christmas crib or a picture of the birth of Jesus, a candle, and some baby photos of the children.

- Light the candle. While doing so, remind the children that the lighted candle is a sign of the presence of Jesus who is with us when we pray.

## Meditation

Read the following guided meditation to the children.

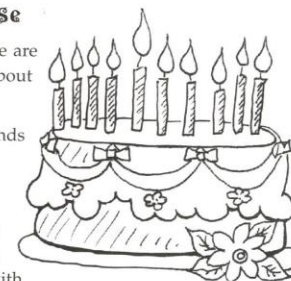
## Relaxation Exercise

Today in our prayer time we are going to talk with Jesus about birthdays—yours and his.

First we need to clear our minds and relax our bodies.

Sit straight and tall.

Close your eyes and imagine you are looking at a large birthday cake decorated with lighted candles.



Watch the candles flickering before you and breathe deeply and slowly as you prepare to blow them out with...one...long...breath.

Breathe in and out...in and out...in and out.

Now take a long deep breath and see yourself blowing out all the candles on the cake.

Breathe deeply and slowly a few more times and feel pleased with your effort.

Birthday cakes are a reminder of the day we were born.

They help us to celebrate each new year of life with joy and thanksgiving.

## Focus

Open your eyes now and look at the prayer table/mat.

See the baby photos and the crib.

Take a moment to remember the story of your own birth...

where it took place...

who was there...

who came to visit...

who brought you gifts and presents.

Recall any special story your parents have told you about your birth...

happy...anxious...or funny moments they may have shared with you.

*Pause*

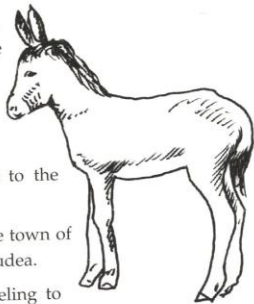
Look at the crib.

It tells the story of Jesus' birth which took place in the town of Bethlehem.

Jesus was not born in a hospital but most likely in a cave in the hillside around Bethlehem or in a stable or barn attached to a house.

Jesus' parents were there...Mary his mother...and Joseph his foster father.

The shepherds from the countryside came to visit...and the wise men brought Jesus gifts.



### **Ponder**

Close your eyes now and listen to the story of Jesus' birth.

It happened on a cold night in the town of Bethlehem in the countryside of Judea.

Mary and Joseph had been traveling to Bethlehem

to be registered in the population census that the governor of the area had ordered.

They had traveled many miles.

The journey was long and slow.

Mary was seated on a donkey and Joseph walked the whole way beside her.

By the time they arrived in Bethlehem, they were tired and in need of somewhere to stay.

Joseph and Mary tried many places, but all the living space was already taken by the many visitors

who had come to Bethlehem for the census.

The town was crowded with people from all over the land.

Eventually Mary and Joseph were shown a clear, dry area where they could bed down for the night and rest.

It was a place where the animals were sheltered during winter, but which was free at this time because the weather was mild and the animals were out in the fields.

While Mary and Joseph were there, the time came for Jesus to be born.

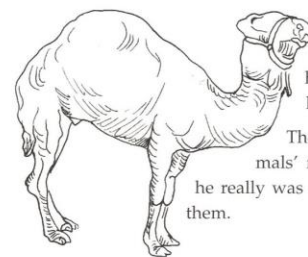
And so it happened...and Mary and Joseph were so happy when they looked at the little child.

They could hear the angels in heaven singing with joy.

The angels were praising God and announcing the birth of this very special child.

Mary held Jesus close to her, wrapped him carefully in a blanket, and placed him in the animals' feed box, which had been carefully prepared with clean hay to make it comfortable for the tiny child.

Very soon the shepherds arrived to visit and pay homage.



They knew that Jesus was no ordinary baby and so they came from the surrounding hills to see him and to adore him.

They looked at Jesus in the animals' feed box and wondered who he really was and what his birth meant for them.

Later on, the wise men arrived.

They came from the East, riding on camels.

They brought with them special gifts of gold, incense, and perfume.

They too knew that Jesus was a special baby, so they came to worship him and bring him gifts suitable for a king.

## Pray

Imagine for a moment that you are also there in Bethlehem...

that you too have come to visit.

Picture Mary and Joseph...

the shepherds...

and the wise men...

all interested in and admiring the newborn baby...

the baby who was to be the Savior of the world.

As you watch, you see Mary beckoning you to come closer.

She lifts Jesus out of the feed box and holds him in her arms so you can see him.

What does he look like?

Is he sleeping or is he awake and looking at you?

Take a moment to gaze at Jesus and remember that he is the Son of God.

You may like to say something to Jesus...

*Pause*

Now imagine that you have brought a gift for Jesus...

