

Stations of the Nativity

God invites each of us to step into His story and many people are eager to be part of something real that captivates imagination and ignites purpose. During Lent the Church gives us the Stations of the Cross as an interactive worship form, allowing us to reflect on the events of Holy Week. Perhaps the 'Stations of the Nativity', also named 'Stations of Christmas', can be used equally well to remind us of the events leading to the wonderful miracle of the Lord's birth. They can be used also as a basis for family prayer during the Advent and Christmass season and are often recommended by the Catholic catechists. Many Anglo-Catholic churches have recently introduced a devotional service for Advent and early Christmass-tide.

Various settings have been developed over the last twenty five years including those by Lawrence Boadt of the Latin Mass Society. There are some variations in the stations used and the best known are those from Jeff Graham, a Church Schools Adviser, who produced a simple resource to help pupils understand and reflect on the key elements of the Christmas Story. It has images and the following readings which can be read during December in collective acts of worship and, as each station is completed, may be displayed in a prominent place in the school.

Station 1: the Annunciation: [Luke Chapter 1 Verses 26-38](#)

Station 2: the Visitation: [Luke Chapter 1 Verses 39-45](#)

Station 3: the Song of Mary: [Luke Chapter 1 Verses 46-55](#)

Station 4: the Birth of John the Baptist: [Luke Chapter 1 Verses 57-66](#)

Station 5: the Prophecy of Zechariah: [Luke Chapter 1 Verses 67-79](#)

Station 6: Joseph's Dream: [Matthew Chapter 1 Verses 18-23](#)

Station 7 Joseph Takes Mary into His Home: [Matthew Chapter 1 Verses 24-25](#)

Station 8: the Journey to Bethlehem: [Luke Chapter 2 Verses 15-20](#)

Station 9: the Birth of Jesus: [Luke Chapter 2 Verses 6-7](#)

Station 10: the Announcement of the Angels: [Luke Chapter 2 Verses 8-14](#)

Station 11: the Shepherds Share the Good News: [Luke Chapter 2 Verses 15-20](#)

Station 12: the Presentation of Jesus in The Temple: [Luke Chapter 2 Verses 22-24](#)

Station 13: the Blessing of Simeon: [Luke Chapter 2 Verses 28-32](#)

Station 14: the Wise Men Come From the East: [Matthew Chapter 2 Verses 1-12](#)

Evolution

It is good to note that, more locally, Trinity All Saints School Bingley have worked with Fr Andrew Clarke to produce a set of fourteen stations which help the local teaching and worship in the parish. Most of the stations used have pictures by the pupils from all year groups. (These were used at S. Chad's in 2017.)

F-Elizabeth Evans

Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh - extracted from an article by F-Elizabeth Evans

Gold, frankincense and myrrh are mentioned in Greek mythology. The Trojan War may have been caused by a golden apple given by Paris to Aphrodite, while German mythology has the goddess Idun possessing golden apples which conferred eternal youth on the gods. Gold apples also appear in international magical stories. Many ancient peoples had interest in gold which came from regions such as Ophir and Sheba. Today archaeologists identify the Yemen as the location of Sheba, while Ophir is in the south of Israel. Egyptians saw its yellow blaze as a symbol of the sun god Ra, while the Incas thought gold was the sweat of the sun (and silver the tears of the moon).

When Jesus was born gold had, as today, connotations of wealth and honour and was the most precious metal used in the temple sanctuary and royal courts. The gift of gold might have brought some economic relief to Mary and Joseph but for us it serves to emphasize that, even though Jesus was born in humble circumstances, He is to be venerated.



Frankincense is a dried aromatic resin from the *Boswellia sacra* tree. In Greek the frankincense-tree is called libanus, which can be translated as Lebanon where it was traded considerably in the Greco-Roman period. In mythology frankincense was a suitable offering to Apollo. Frankincense was important in the biblical sanctuary services and was used alongside animal sacrifices. In Ephesians 5:2 Paul points out that the love of Christ is the 'sweet-smelling aroma' that rose up to God when He was sacrificed for our sins. The gift of frankincense given to the new-born Jesus undoubtedly revealed the purpose for which He came into this world.



Myrrh comes from the Hebrew and Aramaic words for 'bitter' and is another aromatic tree resin. Ancient Egyptians used myrrh as an embalming ingredient. The Israelites used it to delay decay and reduce the foul odour of corpses. Smyrna is the Greek name for myrrh and the name of a city in Asia Minor to the west of Israel.



This city came to be named after the word for myrrh because, in Greek mythology, its namesake was turned into a myrrh tree. In John 19 we are reminded that after Jesus had died on the cross Nicodemus brought a large quantity of myrrh and aloes to embalm His body even though myrrh was such a valuable substance.



These gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh indicate the rich significance of Christ's mission among us. Gold is for kingship; frankincense foretells His sacrifice and myrrh His identifying with sorrow. The Wise Men from the East bearing the gifts also serve to represent the four directions of the compass so pointing to the global reach of Christ's mission to earth. His birth may not have been recognized, but from the outset, He was given the divine directive to die for sin for whole world. Gifts which Jesus cherishes are those that come to Him freely. He longs to extend His gift of salvation to the whole world. Wherever we are the Saviour constantly draws us to Him. In exchange for the gift of our hearts He gives us peace, joy and love, together with the assurance that we too will pass from death unto life, just as He did.