



OUT OF EGYPT

An Orthodox Nativity Pageant



WRITTEN BY
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NOTES

Curious as to the meaning behind the catchy Coventry Carol, I researched its' history. This heart-wrenching song made me reflect upon events surrounding Christ's birth that often get overlooked. I am sorry that in the end, the song did not make it into the final draft of this play, however you may find it fits in well with your production. Sometimes you just can't tell how things will work out. Being inspired by this song, I wrote this play to help students understand a bit more of the Nativity story as told by the Bible. Included characters are Sts. Zachariah and Elizabeth, Herod and his guards. The flight into and out of Egypt highlights Christ as a refugee. These details tend to get lost in the condensed version of the Nativity, but they are certainly part of the whole story. This was written for a larger body of students, but naturally some of the parts can be condensed or roles can be shared. There is a lot of opportunity for behind the scenes preparation and creativity as well. It runs about 25 minutes in length. I was very excited to write it and everyone loved it. I hope you do too.

May you be blessed by this play and the journey you will take through the Nativity season in preparing to perform it.

A special thank you to all who donated their time, energy and talents helping this pageant come together and, most importantly, helping the children understand more deeply the God they serve.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

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+ This pageant is dedicated to all those who have found themselves refugees in any manner, and for those who have given their lives for the sake of Christ. +

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CHARACTER LIST

ANGEL GABRIEL
JOSEPH
MARY
HEROD
2 GUARDS
3 WISEMEN
NARRATORS 1,2,3,4,5
ZACHARIAH
ELIZABETH
DONKEY (CAN DOUBLE AS JESUS)
COUSINS
SHEPHERDS
ANGELS
JESUS

PROPS NEEDED

TEMPLE TABLE/ CANDLESTICK/ CARPET/ PRIEST OUTFIT

HEROD'S OUTFIT

ELIZABETH PREGNANT TUMMY ICON

STAR MOBILES- STICKS/ BRANCHES/ GOLD PAPER STARS (PARENTS CAN MAKE THIS DURING DRESS REHEARSAL)

STAR OF BETHLEHEM

BETHLEHEM CAVE

THRONE ROOM/ PLANTS/RUG/BOSTON FERNS/COLUMN STANDS/ CURTAIN(S)/THRONE

SWORDS

PALM TREES FOR EGYPT

SIGN SAYING "MONTHS BEFORE"/ EGYPT/ NAZARETH/ BETHLEHEM/ TEMPLE OF THE LORD/ HEROD'S PALACE/ FLASHFORWARD/ HEROD'S PALACE/ GO THIS WAY/ GO THAT WAY/ 1. WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?/ 2. AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?/ 3. HOW EXCITING!/ 4. HOORAH!/ 5. BUT THAT'S NOT HOW IT ENDS, IS IT?

CHALK TABLET/ CHALK

ICON OF THE SLAYING OF THE INNOCENTS

DONKEY (IF NOT USING A PERSON AS A DONKEY)

Out of Egypt

OPENING: (All kids line up on stairs of the stage)

Narrator 4: From the fall of Adam to the present day, people around the world and through time have looked for ways to reconnect to God. Before Christ came, there was no hope of resurrection; this life was hard and death frightening, *but* there were messages from God. He spoke through his prophets many, many times to tell us that he was sending the Messiah; the One who would save us all.

O Come Emmanuel

hymn sung by all children

Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!

Oh, come, our Wisdom from on high,
Who ordered all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!

Narrator 4: Some were short-sighted to think he would save us only from earthly kings or governments. Some discovered the promise of life after death in these words. Still, they all looked for the Messiah and waited, many impatiently. But with all things God does, when the time had fully come... things began to happen.

(Kids sit down on steps & floor)

SCENE 1 ZACHARIAH & ELIZABETH

Stage Center (Zachariah in the temple, serving)

Stage Left (Elizabeth sits facing the wall, head turned down and away from the audience)

(Sign goes up- "Months Before Christ's Nativity")

Narrator 1: Four hundred years had passed since God had spoken to his people. St. Luke tells us the miraculous story of God breaking the silence.

“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zachariah and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

⁷ And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now advanced well in years.

⁸ And it came to pass, that while he served the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.
(enter Angel Gabriel)

¹² And when Zachariah saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

Angel Gabriel: “Fear not, Zachariah: for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you shall have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

¹⁶ And He shall turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Zachariah: “How can this happen? For I am an old man, and my wife is an old woman!”

Angel Gabriel: “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto you, and to show you these glad tidings. And, behold, you shall be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because you did not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.”

EVERYONE: What happened next?

Narrator 1: “And the people waited for Zachariah, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.”

(Zachariah walks home and motions to Elizabeth. She acts surprised and happy.)

Narrator 1: “And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and hid herself five months.”

EVERYONE: And *THEN* what happened?

Elizabeth: “The Lord has taken away my reproach among men.” *(Happy, smiling, goes about cleaning and cooking)*

Stage Right, Front

Narrator 2: “And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

Angel Gabriel: “Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women. Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God. And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS.

³² He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

Mary: “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?”

Angel Gabriel: The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God.

³⁶ And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she has also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.”

Mary: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”

(Gabriel exits)

(Mary gets up and goes to Elizabeth's house.)

Mary: “Elizabeth! Shalom!”

(Elizabeth turns, holds her tummy and acts surprised)

Elizabeth *(loudly and excitedly)*: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. As soon I heard your voice, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she that believed.”

Mary: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. He has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”

(Cousins enter)

Narrator 2: “Now Elizabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neighbors and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zachariah, after the name of his father.

EVERYONE: How Exciting!

Cousins: “Oh! What a miracle! Let us see Baby Zachariah!”

Elizabeth: “Not so! He shall be called John.”

Cousins: “None of your family is called by this name.”

(Turn to ask Zachariah)

Cousins: “What do you say his name is?”

(Zachariah gets a tablet and writes ‘JOHN’ on it.)

(Cousins all marvel. Zachariah motions to his mouth. Acts surprised. Starts saying out loud...)

Zachariah: “His name is John! Praise God! He keeps his promises!”

(Cousins jump up and down, are excited. Hug each other. Raise hands and eyes up to God. Smile.)

EVERYONE: *(loudly)* HOORAH!!

Narrator 2: “And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him.

And Zachariah was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying...”

Zachariah: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,

In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Narrator 2: And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel. He is known to us today as St. John the Baptist, the Forerunner of Christ.

(Choir stands up to sing)

(Cousins, Zachariah, Elizabeth stand with choir)

Song: Psalm 103

Hymn sung by all children

Bless the LORD, O my soul: blessed art thou oh LORD

Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

Bless the LORD, O my soul: and forget not all his benefits:

Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases;

The LORD is compassionate and merciful, longsuffering and of great goodness.

Bless the LORD, O my soul, blessed art thou O LORD

SCENE 2 TO BETHLEHEM

(Meanwhile, on Stage Left, Bethlehem, cave & the star appears)

Enter Stage Left

(Mary, Joseph, donkey, go to cave. Mary picks up baby from manger and holds him.)

Narrator 3: In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

(Angels stage right on floor by the classroom, shepherds and sheep stage left on floor)

Song: While Shepherds Watched

Hymn sung by all children

Verse 1

While shepherds watched their sheep by night
Glad tidings brought an angel bright

(Angels travel to shepherds and hold their arms out. Shepherds act surprised and then excited)

Chorus

How great their joy
(Great their joy)
Joy Joy Joy
(joy, joy, joy)
Glory to God in Heaven on high
(Glory to God in Heaven on high)

Verse 2

'Fear not at all,' He said to them

'Jesus is born in Bethlehem.'

Chorus

Verse 3

Jesus we hasten to adore
Grant us thy blessing ever more

Chorus

(Angels & Shepherds walk on stage and make a prostration before Christ, the children sing Kontakion)

Song: Nativity Kontakion

Hymn sung by all children

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent in essence
The earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One,
The angels with shepherds glorify Him,
And the Magi with the star travel on their way,
For a new child has been born for our sakes,
God before the ages.

SCENE 3 WISEMEN FROM AFAR

(Sign goes up: Flashforward)

(Wisemen enter from the back of the room, approach stage right, which is Herod's throne room.)

(stage Right- King Herod's palace- throne, pillars & plants, carpet)

(King Herod sits on throne, guards on either side)

Narrator 5: The wisemen saw the star and sought after the newborn king. And who better would know the news of this birth than the king of the region? So to Herod they went with their inquiry.

(Wisemen enter Herod's throneroom. They step up to his feet and bow low.)

Wiseman 1: We have come from the east, following the star that points to the birth of the Messiah. We have come to worship him. Where can he be found?

Herod: What are you talking about? I do not know of what you speak.

Wiseman 2: The King of the Jews, DUH!!

Herod: (slyly) When you have found this newborn king, come back and tell me so that I too can worship.

(Wisemen bow low again, turn and walk away. Herod reveals his true thoughts after they leave.)

Herod: Call my own wisemen! What have they to say of these prophecies? This will not happen! I am the king! And only he who I choose will reign after me!

(The wisemen travel to the cave, and give him their gifts, and then bow low.)

Narrator 5: After the wisemen found the Christ child and worshipped him, an angel of the Lord warned them in a dream of Herod's true intent to kill the babe. And so they returned to their own country without reporting back to Herod.

(Wisemen exit to back of room)

SCENE 4 FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Stage Left

Stars overhead, crickets chirping. Mary and Jesus are sleeping apart from Joseph. Joseph is on a cot sleeping, snoring. Angel Gabriel comes to him in a dream.

Gabriel: "Arise!"

(Joseph is startled, is scared of the angel but listens well)

Gabriel: "Take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt. Stay there until I bring you news, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."

(Joseph nods head vigorously agreeing.)

(Gabriel exits stage left.)

(Sign goes up: Go That Way- EGYPT)

(Joseph rushes to gather his things and Mary and Baby Jesus. Hurriedly exits with a pack and the donkey towards Egypt (in the rear of room), while Narrator speaks.)

Narrator 1: “When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt. There they stayed until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet Hosea, saying, ‘**OUT OF EGYPT I HAVE CALLED MY SON.**’”

SCENE 5 THRONE ROOM OF HEROD

Stage Right

(Herod is sitting on his throne, dressed in riches. He is restless, fidgety, head leaned heavily on his right hand. Guards stand on both sides of the room. The court official stands at the left hand of the king with paper ready. In the background you can hear children humming “We 3 Kings”.)

Herod: “Where are those men of the east who came seeking after a newborn king?! It has been weeks since they have been here asking questions and implying that there will soon be an uprising in support of this so-called king’s birth. I have been haunted by them day and night. Their words are like a song that never ends! I demanded of them to return to me with news of who he is and where he can be found. How dare they disobey me?”

Herod forcefully stands up and shouts,

Herod: “How dare *anyone* imagine that there should be born a king apart from my line?”

(Pauses and thinks as he paces back and forth. Count to 5)

“There shall be no doubt of who is rightfully in charge. No one will forget the name of Herod for all time! As of this day, every man child who is two years old and younger shall be put to death! My enemies will fear me and no man will *dare* come against me!”

(Humming ceases)

“Guards! Do your duty to your king! Now go!”

EVERYONE: Gasps!

(Guards bow to Herod, then turn and march out, Stage left.)

Weeping is heard continually as the Narrator reads the scripture.

Narrator 2: “Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying,

‘In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.’”

(Icon is lifted up of the Slaughter of the Innocents)

EVERYONE: That’s not how it ends, is it?

Narrator 3: Of course not! This is what the Bible says: But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, ‘Arise, take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they who sought the young child’s life are dead.’

(Joseph, Mary and Jesus walk back to the stage, someone holds up sign, Nazareth/ Go this way)

And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

CONCLUSION

Narrator 4: And so, with all things God ordains, in the fullness of time, the Messiah *did* come. Christ was born in lowly estate. Many in the world around him did not believe and even tried to kill him from the time he was a child. Knowing all this beforehand, He who is from eternity God, for our sakes became a little child.

St. John the Forerunner tells us,

Everyone Together: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life.”

Narrator 4: We have seen the True Light; a Light to enlighten the Gentiles, and glory to your people Israel. We proclaim it to the world: CHRIST IS BORN!

Everyone Together: GLORIFY HIM!

Song: Joy to the world

Verse 1

Joy to the world! The LORD is come!
Let Earth receive her king!
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and Nature Sing
And Heaven and Nature sing
And heaven, and heaven and Nature sing

Verse 2

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding Joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, Repeat, the sounding joy.

APPENDIX

Tradition tells us that St. John the Forerunner was hidden by his mother, Elizabeth in a cave where God protected them from the soldiers following Herod's orders to kill all male children aged 2 years and under. This is how St. John came to be in the wilderness and was cared for by angels and taught the wonders of God. His father, St. Zachariah, was killed while serving in the temple because he would not tell where his son was hidden. It was believed that perhaps John was the Messiah whom the wisemen were seeking because everyone would have heard of the miraculous circumstances of his birth.

The Return to Nazareth

[\(Isaiah 61:1-11; Matthew 13:53-58; Mark 6:1-6; Luke 2:39-40; Luke 4:16-30\)](#)

MUSIC LYRICS

LIST OF MUSIC IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

O COME EMMANUEL

PSALM 103

WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED

NATIVITY KONTAKION

JOY TO THE WORLD

O Come Emmanuel

Verse 1

Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!

Verse 2

Oh, come, our Wisdom from on high,
Who ordered all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!

Psalm 103

Bless the LORD, O my soul: blessed art thou
oh LORD
Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is
within me, bless his holy name.
Bless the LORD, O my soul: and forget not
all his benefits:
Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals
all your diseases;
The LORD is compassionate and merciful,
longsuffering and of great goodness.
Bless the LORD, O my soul, blessed art thou
O LORD

While Shepherds Watched

Verse 1

While shepherds watched their sheep by
night
Glad tidings brought an angel bright

Chorus

How great their joy
(Great their joy)
Joy Joy Joy
(joy, joy, joy)
Glory to God in Heaven on high
(Glory to God in Heaven on high)

Verse 2

'Fear not at all,' He said to them
'Jesus is born in Bethlehem.'

Chorus

Verse 3

Jesus we hasten to adore
Grant us thy blessing ever more

Chorus

Nativity Kontakion

Today the Virgin gives birth to the
Transcendent in essence
The earth offers a cave to the
Unapproachable One,
The angels with shepherds glorify Him,
And the Magi with the star travel on their
way,
For a new child has been born for our sakes,
God before the ages.

Joy to the World

Verse 1

Joy to the world! The LORD is come!
Let Earth receive her king!
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and Nature Sing
And Heaven and Nature sing
And heaven, and heaven and Nature sing

Verse 2

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and
plains
Repeat the sounding Joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, Repeat, the sounding joy.

Coventry Carol (*optional*)

Chorus

Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child,
Bye bye, lully, lullay.
thou little tiny child,
Bye bye, lully, lullay.

Verse 1

O sisters too, how may we do
For to preserve this day
This poor youngling for whom we do sing,
"Bye bye, lully, lullay"?

(Chorus)

Verse 2

Herod the king, in his raging,
Charged he hath this day
His men of might in his own sight
All young children to slay.

(Chorus)

Verse 3

That woe is me, poor child, for thee
And ever mourn and may
For thy parting neither say nor sing,
"Bye bye, lully, lullay."

(Chorus)

YOUTUBE LINKS

PLAYLIST <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL04hnYRvw-fabDmb84d6aAkiPHWCvIXLA>

O Come Emmanuel

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xtpJ4Q_Q-4&list=PL04hnYRvw-fabDmb84d6aAkiPHWCvIXLA&index=3

Bing Crosby While Shepherds Watched

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjGtnDIGtDc&index=1&list=PL04hnYRvw-fabDmb84d6aAkiPHWCvIXLA>

Joy to the World

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30OaM6b48k8&list=PL04hnYRvw-fabDmb84d6aAkiPHWCvIXLA&index=2>

Coventry Carol

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_jIYyPOoEc8&list=PL04hnYRvw-fabDmb84d6aAkiPHWCvIXLA&index=4