

CAFOD NATIVITY PLAY 2023

A Knock at the Door!

Or, the inhospitable inn keepers
and a baby born to welcome us home.

You can do this play with a lot of people or just a few; with full costumes, modern clothes like business jackets for the innkeepers; or just with crowns, and haloes and wings for the angels.

YOU WILL NEED:

- A door frame, with or without the door to open – but you can make it an imaginary door!
- At least five actors
- A star - silver foil and cardboard work well (and can be recycled!) – and someone to hold it up!
- A baby doll, or a real baby (ask the baby's parents about her/his performance readiness)
- A manger – but this is optional
- Costumes! Whether traditional or modern e.g. suits for the innkeepers:
- Crowns or similar and three gifts for Magis – boxes, jars or vases
- Haloes e.g. tinsel and wings for the narrator angels

GET PERFORMANCE READY!

- Work out where your stage is and where everyone can get ready, and come on and off stage.
- If you're having a door, put it in the middle of the stage at a slight angle, opening out from Stage Right to Stage Left.
- Ask people for a suggested donation for their ticket – you can do this on the door or beforehand online with a platform like EventBrite or JustGiving, or cafod.org.uk/celebration
- You can sell refreshments or even Christmas baking and crafts. Find our top tips at cafod.org.uk/advent
- Remember to tell people that their donations will help families who have fled violence and need shelter, sustenance, and peace and hope this Christmas.
- Make sure people can donate as they leave using contactless, QR codes or cash giving envelopes to help families needing shelter this Christmas. Order free at shop.cafod.org.uk and cafod.org.uk/contactless.

CAST

Some parts have lots of speaking, some not much, and some are in-between.

OPTION ONE: A SKELETAL CAST...

You can put on this play with five people if they play several parts:

1. One Narrator Angel reading all the narrators' words
2. Mary
3. Joseph
4. Donkey (you could drop this part if you don't have enough people)
5. Inn keepers 1-5 could be the same person – maybe with various hats, wigs, etc.



OPTION TWO: FULL HOUSE CAST!

1. Narrator Angels 1 and 2
2. Mary
3. Joseph
5. Donkey
6. Inn keepers 1, 2 (Steve), 3, 4 and 5
8. Shepherds
9. Magi x3
10. Star, or someone holding up a star (could be first Magi)

Optional extra speaking parts:

Guests at each innkeeper's inn – these can share each inn keeper's lines if you divide them up.

Non-speaking parts:

Camels, sheep, townspeople and angels - as many as you like. You could also add cows and livestock in the stable.

THE NATIVITY PLAY SCRIPT

KICK OFF YOUR PLAY!

Welcome everyone to the Nativity play:

- Thank them for coming, and remind them how they can donate to CAFOD's Advent appeal, and that their support will make a huge difference to families in need this Christmas.
- Remember to tell them where refreshments, loos and fire exits are. Ask everyone to turn off their phones.
- Now, without further ado, the play can begin!

You might want to open with a song: 'Come and join the celebration', 'Angels we have heard on High', 'Like a Candle Flame' or 'Come and sing the Christmas Story' for example.

Narrator Angels 1 and 2 are already on the stage.

Narrator 1: Hello!

Narrator 2: Hello everyone!

Narrator 1: Happy Advent!

Narrator 2: A blessed and peaceful Advent to you all, is what s/he means...!

Narrator 1: Yes, yes, blessed and peaceful! We're so excited to be here with you all!

Narrator 2: Yes because we've got the most wonderful story to share with you, a story all about doors (*points to the door in the middle of the stage, if you have one*).

Narrator 1: (*interrupting*) ...because, we've come here from a very special place you see! (*points to halo. Points to Narrator 2's halo. They both point to their wings, turn around to show the audience their wings, point to each other's wings*)



Narrator 2: Yes, that's right. We've come here from the realms of glory

Narrator 1: ...That's heaven.

Narrator 2: To wing our flight o'er all the earth

Narrator 1: *(points to the ground)* That's here!

Narrator 2: We who sang creation's story

Narrator 1: *(points to self)* That was us!

Narrator 2: Now proclaim Messiah's birth!

Narrator 1: *(breaks into singing)* Glor-or-or-or-or-or-or-or-or-or-ia!

Narrator 2: But we'd better get on, because you lot all live in temporal not eternal time.

Narrator 1: Yes, well. The reason we're here, is because of Christmas.

Narrator 2: *(nodding)* Yep. God came to be with you all.

Narrator 1: *(with wild arm gestures)* to burst in and break through and open up the way!

Narrator 2: And he came as a tiny baby, not as a grand or powerful person, not in a palace or a castle, but somewhere humble, somewhere ordinary.

Narrator 1: He made himself small and vulnerable, although he was all-powerful, and so he needed shelter, and welcome.

Narrator 2: And so our story today is about doors. About how Jesus needed someone to open a door and welcome him in.

Narrator 1: And you can open a door today too. To Jesus, and to those who most need shelter, and welcome.

PAUSE

But we'll get to that.

(they both move towards the door. If it's an imaginary door, narrator one gestures to it to show the audience they need to picture a door here).

Narrator 1: Here's our first friendly-looking door. *(gestures)*. A door you might knock on and find it opens to you.

Narrator 2: A door where you might find room at the inn.

Narrator 2: *(aside, slightly pedantically)* Which, technically, in the context of the time, actually meant a house had room on the ground floor where the livestock...

Narrator 1: *(interrupting, impatiently)* Yes, alright, thank you, History Angel.



Narrator 2: *(smiling angelically)* You are welcome!

Narrator 1: So here's our first inn keep. He lives in Bethlehem. He has an inn.

Narrator 2: And we find him in a busy – really quite a peak – season.

Narrator 1: And he's got a lot of guests, a lot of people to fit in.

Narrator 2: And then comes a couple

Narrator 1: Maybe you'll recognise them....

ENTER Mary Joseph and Donkey Stage Right

Narrator 2: This one is Joseph

Narrator 1: Leading the donkey

Narrator 2: This one is Mary

Narrator 1: Pregnant with a baby

Both narrators: And the baby's about to be born.

ENTER Inn Keeper 1 Stage Left, and stops before the door in the middle of the stage.

Inn keeper 1: But the town's really busy

Mary: We know, we can see.

Inn keeper 1: And the inn's really heaving

Joseph: I'm sure it must be

Inn keeper 1: And I'm run off my feet

Mary: Yeah, you look really beat.

PAUSE. Inn keeper looks taken aback. Mary puts a hand over her mouth, thinking she's said the wrong thing.

Mary: I just mean, you must have had a hard day.

Inn keeper 1: Well, it's been a busy week

Mary: Yeah, we can understand that

Joseph: But if you had just a tiny bit of room?

Inn keeper 1: It's a squeeze

Mary: We'd be happy with anything



Inn keeper 1: I'm sure, but I've already got guests with a baby, you see
And she's keeping us all awake.
All night.
Every night.
I mean, wow. That baby's got lungs.
And all the kids running around.
And the livestock.
The dogs.
The cats.
The noise.
It's endless.
One day, I think they'll invent some small sort of plugs you can put in your ears, to block out loud noises, and actually get some sleep....

Mary and Joseph look blankly at him.

But listen, I know you're in need

Why don't you try that next inn up the way?

Mary (disappointed): Ok.

EXIT INN KEEPER 1 Stage Left.

Joseph: Come on, not far now.

Narrator 2: So they carried on round

Narrator 1: Through the streets of the town

Narrator 2: To the door of an inn that belonged to Old Steve.

Joseph knocks, a good few assertive knocks

Joseph: Hello? Hello? We're looking for Steve?

ENTER Inn Keeper 2, Steve, Stage Left. Steve comes to the door, opens it and looks out at Mary and Joseph.

Steve: Hello there, I'm Stephen

Joseph: Oh, good – we were told



Mary: That you might have a room

Joseph: Or just, any room

Mary: Anywhere we could squeeze

Steve: Oh dear

Narrator 1: Said Old Steve

Steve: Oh I wish I could help you

Narrator 2: And Steve really means that.

Narrator 1: He's got a good heart.

Steve: But I've said yes to everyone, long after we were full
And now there's no room, I mean no room to breathe!
We're full to the rafters, we're full to the gills
And I wish I could help you
But I've no bed for myself!

Mary (very sadly): No bed for yourself?!

Joseph: Well, thank you for trying

Steve: I tell you what, wherever you find, pop back and tell me and maybe I could come and kip just, in the doorway or something?

Joseph: Oh dear. Well, we'll keep looking.

EXIT Inn Keeper 2, Steve, Stage Left.

Narrator 2: So they had to keep going, just dead on their feet

Narrator 1: Just looking for somewhere to shelter and sleep.

ENTER Inn Keeper 3 Stage Left, wearing a face mask. Mary knocks at the door and Inn Keeper 3 opens and looks out tentatively.

Mary: Er, hello, we were wondering...?

Inn keeper 3 (*crossly*): Do you have fleas?

Joseph: I'm sorry?

Inn keeper 3: Or COVID? Or any disease?

Mary: Not that we know of.

Joseph: My wife's pregnant, you see

Inn keeper 3: Well, is that contagious?

Mary: Erm, it's more that we need

A room for the night.

Inn keeper 3: No room! Not unless you have papers

To show you're bug free.

Joseph: Sorry, no.

Narrator 1: So they tried the next inn.

EXIT Inn Keeper 3 Stage Left.

Narrator 2: Because they didn't lose hope.

Joseph: Even though

Mary's struggling to cope.

Mary: Look, there's a light!

Joseph: Maybe, this time...?

ENTER INN KEEPER 4 Stage Left. Joseph knocks at the door. Inn keeper 4 opens and jumps out at them. Mary Joseph and Donkey jump back, surprised.

Inn keeper 4: Hello? Are you guests?

Are you customers? Yes?

Mary: Oh yes! Yes we could be!

We could be your guests!

Inn keeper 4: Fantastic. Eight hundred coins, please.

Joseph: What?

Innkeeper 4: Yes I know, I do know it's rather a lot

But the rents have gone up

With the Romans, you see

And I can't give my guests less than

A five course breakfast for free

Mary: For free?

Inn keeper 4: Well, included.



Joseph: So, paid for?

Inn keeper 4: Well, free after you you've paid.
And my bed linen has to be Egyptian made.

Mary: Egypt!

Joseph: *(aside to Mary)* Very hot. Wouldn't want to go there in hurry.

Mary: *(back to Inn keeper 4)* But we don't need any of that.

Joseph: No, we just need a small room, a bed

Mary: And we haven't got much cash.

Joseph: Just need a roof overhead.

Mary: I'm having a baby you see.

Inn keeper 4: A baby! That's a whole other customer!
A whole other guest!

Joseph: Does that mean that you might be about to say – yes?

Innkeeper 4: *a long pause*
Really, a very long pause.
Keep pausing...
Erm,well that would be a lot of mess
On the Egyptian cotton now wouldn't it?

Mary: *(surprised)* Um, I suppose so, I mean
We've never had one before.
A baby.

Joseph: But we'll keep everything clean!

Innkeeper 4: First time parents?! A baby! No cash!
Oh no
I'm afraid I just can't.
The sheets are Egyptian you know.

Narrator 1: And so another door closes.

EXIT Inn Keeper 4 Stage Left.

Imagine their hearts

How they sink.

And they look round in the dark at the little town

Where no one can take them in.

Mary and Joseph look round despondently.

Mary: I'm so terribly tired. My legs really ache.

Joseph: I know. If only...

Donkey: I am tired too.

Joseph: Probably not as tired as the pregnant lady.

Donkey: Well, I have four legs to be tired on. That's twice as much aching as you have.

Narrator 2: *(pointing)* But what's that?

Mary and Joseph both look Stage Left.

ENTER Inn keeper 5 Stage Left, holding a candle or a mobile phone with the torch on.

Mary: A light!

Joseph: Just – don't get your hopes up too high this time.

They reach out to knock but Inn keeper 5 gets there before they can knock, opens the door or mimes opening a door and shines the light out towards them, looking to see who's there.

Inn keeper 5: Who's there? Do you need help?

It's a cold night to be out

And a dark one.

And you look like you've come a long way.

Donkey: We really have.

Inn keeper 5: And you're having a baby! Oh wow! You must be in need of a rest!

Inn keeper 5 opens the door wide and steps out, holding out a hand to help Mary through the door.

Mary: Oh, thank you.

Joseph: Actually, what we really need is a little bit of room, to stay in.

Inn keeper 5: Well you must stay here! We're full to the roof – but we'll find you some room.

Mary: Oh! Will you?





Joseph: Really?

Inn keeper 5: Definitely. It may not be much, but what we have, we'll share with you.

Donkey: Do you have any Egyptian cotton?

Inn keeper 5 opens the door wide and they all go in, innkeeper 5 last.

Inn keeper 5: Could you put up with being in with the livestock?

Mary: Definitely!

Joseph: You're the first person who's welcomed us in.

Mary: And it's so warm! And hay is always so soft!

Donkey: I mean, it's not Egyptian cotton. But.

Joseph: We'll take it!

Inn keeper 5: Let me get you some blankets. And a hot meal. You get settled in.

EXIT Innkeeper 5, Stage Left.

Cows, sheep and any other livestock characters come on Stage Right and surround Mary and Joseph and the donkey. If you have a manger, the animals can bring it on with them, and the baby Jesus can already be in the manger.

Mary picks up the baby.

Narrator 2: And so the baby was born in the stable, and Mary laid him in a manger, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and they called him Jesus.

ENTER Innkeeper 5 Stage Left.

Inn keeper 5: Oh what a beautiful baby! I'm so glad I welcomed you in.

Narrator 1: And we can only hope that feeling stayed!

Narrator 2: What feeling?

Narrator 1: The gladness! The innkeeper feeling glad about welcoming them in!

Narrator 2: Oh yes! Because a lot more people showed up then, didn't they?

Narrator 1: *(proudly)* Yes, we saw to that.

Narrators 1 and 2 hold up their arms in angelic fashion.

ENTER shepherds and sheep Stage Right.

Shepherds: Is it this way then?

Narrators 1 and 2: *(pointing to Jesus)* YES!



Shepherds: Wow!

Inn keeper 5: Erm, ok, what's all this now?

ENTER star, Magi and camels Stage Left.

Magi 1: Is it this way now?

Star: Yes! Right here! The town of Bethlehem! (*points to Jesus*)

Magi 2: Wow! It's really true!

Inn keeper 5: Oh, hello, who are you all then?

Mary: (*tentatively*): erm, Inn keeper, sorry to ask, but you've been so kind, and we met this lovely man called Steve...

ENTER Steve Stage Right

Inn keeper 5: Oh Steve! You've not given someone your own bed again have you?

Steve nods sheepishly

Narrator 2: Because that's what it's like sometimes when you open a door.

Narrator 1: You might get more than you bargained for.

Narrator 2: But the good thing is, you welcomed someone in who needed that.

Narrator 1: And maybe it was Jesus.

Mary: Please open a door this Advent and give shelter, and hope, and love, to some of the people who need that most in our world this Christmas.

Joseph: It just takes a gift, however big or small, when you leave today.

Innkeeper 5: And that's one of the ways we welcome in God at Advent.

END

Sing Long Ago, Prophets Knew (Who will make him welcome?), Away in a Manger, or O Come all Ye Faithful to finish.

Make sure people can donate as they leave using contactless, QR codes or cash giving envelopes to help families with no shelter or safety this Christmas – every gift makes a difference and puts our Advent hope and faith into real, practical action.