

Light of the World

Directions: Read the beginning of John's Gospel with your family and discuss the questions. Then reflect on the painting.

A Reading from the Gospel of John 1:1-5, 9-14: The Word Became Flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be.

What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world

came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God. And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

Questions

1. What do the first two lines of this Gospel tell us about the Word?
2. What came to be through the Word?
3. What shines in the darkness and will not be overcome by it?
4. We understand this Gospel reading to be about Jesus Christ. How do the following verses describe what you know about Jesus? "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God."
5. The last sentence of this Gospel describes the Incarnation, God becoming man in the Person of Jesus Christ. Though the exact moment of the Incarnation occurred at the Annunciation, Christmas is the day on which the Incarnation was revealed to the world at Jesus' birth. How does this Gospel reading help us to understand Christmas better?

Adoration of the Shepherds
GERARD VAN HONTHORST (1592–1656)



Pomerania State Museum.

Adoration of the Shepherds

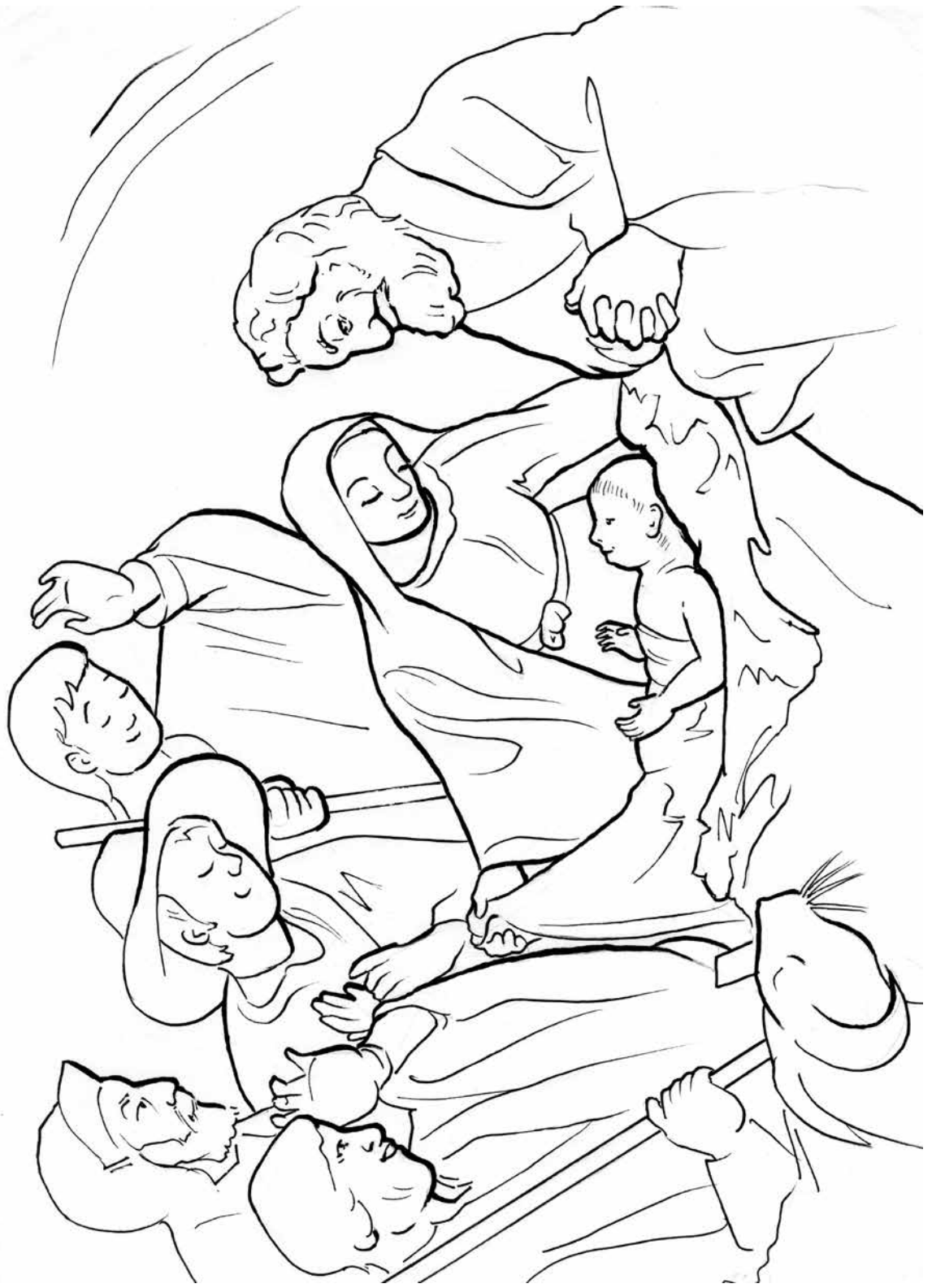


Adoration of the Shepherds by Gerard van Honthorst (1592–1656)

Directions: Take some time to quietly view and reflect on the painting. Then discuss the questions below.

1. What stands out to you about this painting?
2. Who are the people in this painting?
3. Where is the source of light in this painting? Why do you think the artist chose to depict the light source in this way?
4. Whom is Mary looking at? What is she doing? What does this tell us about Mary's role in our Catholic Faith?
5. The beginning of John's Gospel tells us about the Word of God, the Light of the World shining in the darkness, and the glory of God revealed. Reread the Gospel story. How does this painting illustrate the truths made known in this Gospel reading?

Adoration of the Shepherds



Answer Key

Light of the World

1. He was in the beginning with God and was (is) God.
2. All things, specifically, life.
3. Life, the light of the human race.
4. Jesus is the light of the world, who shined in the darkness of sin. He is fully God, through whom all things were made, and He became man, born as a human infant. He was rejected by His own people and was crucified and died. But, by His Resurrection, He defeated sin and death, and opened the path to Heaven to all who accept Him. His sacrifice made it possible for all men to be sons and daughters of God again.
5. It is on Christmas that we celebrate the birth of Jesus, and His Incarnation, when God Himself entered into human history as Jesus Christ. Throughout His life, Jesus revealed the Father to us and made known His glory.

Adoration of the Shepherds

1. Accept reasoned answers.
2. Mary, Joseph, Baby Jesus, and Shepherds.
3. Jesus Himself is the only source of light in the painting. The artist was depicting the Light of the World shining in the darkness, and the glory of God (as John speaks of in His Gospel).
4. Mary is looking directly at Jesus, and she is pulling back His blanket to reveal Him to the shepherds. Mary's role in our faith is always to reveal her Son, Jesus, to us and direct us to Him.
5. Accept reasoned answers.