

THE SEASON OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas Fact File

Colour: Gold and / or white, which reflects the value and the purity of the gift we have been given.

Duration: 12 days. On Christmas Eve, we gather in anticipation of Christ's birth. As the day dawns we celebrate the Eucharistic Feast, a portent of the banquet to come.

Special features: The dedication of the crib at Midnight Mass. This is our response to the love of God who revealed himself in the fragility of the child.

The Gloria, the song of the angels to the shepherds, omitted in Advent, is now sung with gusto! The repetitive response "The word was made flesh and lived among us... and we have seen his glory," is used throughout the liturgy. These words are a simple prayer of praise at this great festival.

Mood: Joyful and celebratory. We reflect upon the mystery of the incarnation, God has come among us, so we give our thanks and praise.

Festivals in Christmas tide: After Christmas Day, we also commemorate the following Feasts which reflect the vulnerability of the Christian path: **St. Stephen** (26th December), **St. John the apostle and evangelist** (27th December), **The Holy Innocents** (28th December). We also remember our Lord's Jewish heritage at the Celebration of **Jesus' naming and circumcision** (1st January).

A prayer of preparation

O Sweet Child of Bethlehem, grant that we may share with all our hearts in this profound mystery of Christmas. Put into our hearts this peace for which we sometimes seek so desperately and which you alone can give us. Help us to know one another better, and to live as children of the same Father. Reveal to us also your beauty, holiness and purity. Awaken in our hearts love and gratitude for your infinite goodness.

Join us altogether in your love. And give us your heavenly peace.

Pope John XXIII



Duccio, 1308-11