

TOUCHDOWN

A LIFE NIGHT ON THE INCARNATION

QUICK GLANCE

ABOUT THIS LIFE NIGHT

We profess that Jesus Christ was God and man, but what does that mean, and, more personally, what does that mean for us? This Life Night enters into the mystery of the Incarnation, exploring how God desires to be close to us and why that is a source of great joy. Let's take the time to ponder and appreciate this great mystery alongside our teens and, together, come to a greater understanding of the amazing love God has for each of us.

MAIN POINTS

1. The Incarnation is the term we use to express the reality that the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, became man.
2. Jesus knows all the struggles and difficulties, triumphs and joys of being human. He thought with a human mind, acted with a human will, and loved with a human heart.
3. The Incarnation shows us how much God loves us and how close he desires to be to us. We do not worship a God who is far off but one who has come close.

SCRIPTURE

John 1:1-5, 14 | John 2:25 | Galatians 4:4-7 | Philippians 2:5-11 | Hebrews 4:15-16

CATECHISM

456-464 | 468-475 | 483

KEY TERMS

Incarnation | Kenosis

SAINTS

Mary, the Mother of God | St. Thomas

RESOURCES

Handout

“God With Us”

Music

Spotify: “LS - Game Day”

Videos

Football Films, “NFL Best ‘Touchdown Celebrations’ of All Time” (youtube.com)

TrueColors, “2013 Iron Bowl ending HIGH DEFINITION Auburn beats Alabama” (youtube.com)

GOAL

The goal of this Life Night is to reflect on the mystery of the Incarnation to help teens understand how deeply God loves them and how close He desires to be to them.

ENVIRONMENT

The main meeting space is transformed to place teens within a touchdown celebration. See the Getting Ready section for more detailed setup suggestions.

GATHER

Touchdown Celebration Showdown

Small groups work together to create the best touchdown celebration as judged by a panel of core members. This activity is a fun nod to the title of the Life Night and sets up the beginning of the Proclaim.

PROCLAIM

Talk: Touchdown

This talk addresses the reality of the Incarnation, when heaven touched down on earth. Teens come to see that Jesus was both God and man and are encouraged to live their lives after Jesus' example. Pondering the mystery of the Incarnation, teens will appreciate that Jesus desires to be present to us at all times and in all circumstances and that we meet him in a particularly powerful way in the Eucharist.

BREAK + SEND

Adoration

Teens spend time dwelling in the presence of Jesus, the Word of God made flesh. They are invited to journal through a handout exploring Jesus' humanity and how he desires to be present to them.

NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

GETTING READY

LIFE NIGHT DATE: _____

FOUR WEEKS BEFORE

- Read through the entire Life Night.
 - Pray with the Scripture and Catechism references.
 - Consult the Resources suggestions.
 - Select a presenter for the Proclaim and contact them this week.
 - Send the Proclaim Teaching Guide to the presenter.
 - Ask a priest or deacon to help with Adoration. Communicate the time, location, and any other needs you have for them.
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TWO WEEKS BEFORE

- Assign core members to the tasks on the Core Meeting Worksheet.
 - Check in with the Proclaim presenter and ask for an outline and slides, if applicable.
 - Schedule practice time with the presenter if needed.
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ONE WEEK BEFORE

- Distribute the Life Night outline to the core members.
 - Pray with the core members over the Life Night.
 - Review the highlights of the Life Night.
 - Explain the core assignments.
 - Encourage the core members to review the discussion questions and pray for their small group.
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THE WEEK OF THE LIFE NIGHT

- Advertise the Life Night on the parish youth group's social media channels.
 - Schedule the Parent Letter email as a follow-up to the Life Night.
 - Make a plan for the Life Night Environment using the suggestions below.
 - Gather the supplies needed for the Life Night.
 - Inform core members of their roles during the session and provide them with the required materials and instructions.
 - Pray for the teens who will be present and experience the Life Night.
 - Download, print, and make copies of the "God With Us" handout found online at lifeteen.com.
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THE DAY OF THE LIFE NIGHT

- Test all audio-video elements of the Life Night.
 - Decorate the youth room using the Environment instructions below.
 - Project an Environment image found online at lifeteen.com.
 - Play the "LS - Game Day" Spotify playlist as teens gather.
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ENVIRONMENT

Write out “TOUCHDOWN!” in big letters on a large scroll of kraft paper and hang it on the wall. Place pom-poms, cheer cones, and foam fingers around the main meeting space. Line the tops of the walls with strings of colored pennants reminiscent of confetti.

Create an endzone near the presentation stage by building a makeshift goalpost out of PVC pipe and painting it yellow. Lay out large swaths of green-painted paper to mimic the grass, and paint your parish name as the logo.

SUPPLIES

	Random items for the Touchdown Celebration Showdown activity, one per group
	Materials for Adoration
	Writing utensils, one per person
	Bible, one per person
	“God With Us” handout, one per person

LIFE NIGHT PLANNER

SCHEDULE

TO-DO

ROOM LAYOUT

CORE MEETING WORKSHEET

Use this outline for your core team meeting before the Youth Mass. The core meeting follows the Gather-Proclaim-Break-Send structure.

CORE MEETING START TIME: _____

GATHER

- Begin with a brief social time and rapid high points/low points of the week from each core member.
- Pray with your core team and include one of the Scripture passages from the Life Night.

Scripture choice: _____

PROCLAIM

- Review the Life Night outline.
- Assign core members to the tasks for this Life Night and write their names in the Core Assignments chart on the next page.

BREAK

- Review the Life Night Break and Send activity with a core member discussion. As a fun bonus to the Gather game, create a touchdown celebration that the core team can present as an example.
- Take questions.

SEND

- Conclude the meeting with a Hail Mary.
- Set up final details for the Life Night.
- Arrive early to the Youth Mass to greet teens as they arrive.

CORE ASSIGNMENTS

Setup	1.	2.	3.
	4.	5.	6.
Check-In	1.	2.	3.
Audio-Video			
Opening Prayer			
Touchdown Celebration Judges	1.	2.	3.
Proclaim Presenter			
Closing Prayer			

NOTES

[illegible]

GATHER

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER 5 min

Gather in the main meeting space and welcome the teens to the Life Night. Introduce any teens or core members attending for the first time, and begin in prayer.

TOUCHDOWN CELEBRATION SHOWDOWN 20 min

Divide the teens into small groups. Give each group 10-15 minutes to create a touchdown celebration. Then, each group presents its celebration to the rest of the group. For inspiration, consider showing a few clips from the “NFL Best ‘Touchdown Celebrations’ of All Time” video in the Resources section.

To add to the fun, give each group a random item to include in their celebration. Dive into the youth ministry storage closet to bring out the most entertaining items for this activity.

The predetermined panel of core members judge which group created the best celebration. The judges assign scores ranging from 1-10 for each group in the following categories. The group with the highest total score wins.

- Choreography
- Creativity
- Group Participation
- Item Incorporation

SUGGESTION

Set up a table and chairs for the judging panel. Give each judge a whiteboard and marker to record and reveal their scores dramatically. Encourage the judges to play the character of a famous talent judge such as Simon Cowell or Bruno Tonioli.

PROCLAIM

GETTING STARTED

This Teaching Guide will help you craft a powerful and personalized talk that will leave a lasting impact. You can make this topic relevant and engaging for your youth group.

Don't just prepare the main points — unleash your creativity and incorporate media and Going Deeper content to captivate your audience and inspire the teens. Whether you use any suggested media or find your own, make sure it's visually engaging, attention-grabbing, and thought-provoking. Consult the Going Deeper section at the back of this resource and highlight the points that most resonate with your teens. Whenever presenting in front of a group, use a Bible or Catechism to read any passage rather than a digital copy or paper printout.

Beyond these guidelines, the most important thing is to be yourself and let the Holy Spirit guide you. Practice your talk, pour your heart into it, and trust that your authenticity and humility have the power to make a difference in the lives of these teens. If possible, record yourself giving the Proclaim and make notes on what you can improve or avoid. This guide is just the beginning — the rest is up to you!

MAIN POINTS

1. The Incarnation is the term we use to express the reality that the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, became man.
2. Jesus knows all the struggles and difficulties, triumphs and joys of being human. He thought with a human mind, acted with a human will, and loved with a human heart.
3. The Incarnation shows us how much God loves us and how close he desires to be to us. We do not worship a God who is far off but one who has come close.

KEY TERMS

Incarnation - The fact that the Son of God assumed human nature to accomplish our salvation. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, is both true God and true man, not part God and part man. (CCC 461, 464)

Kenosis - A term that refers to Jesus' self-emptying by becoming human. (Philippians 2:6)

Main Point 1:
The Incarnation is the term we use to express the reality that the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, became man.

Begin by sharing a story about a famous touchdown. Choose one for yourself, or use the sample story scripted below.

- There is something great about college football. Every fall, millions of people watch teams from across the country compete for a chance at the National Championship.
- Toward the end of the regular season, there's a special week called Rivalry Week. Many of the most prominent rival pairings play against one another this week. Players give their all. No one wants to lose in Rivalry Week.
- For those of you who don't know, Auburn and Alabama have one of the greatest rivalries in college football, known as the Iron Bowl. The first game in the rivalry was played well over a century ago. Every year, both teams give it their all to win the game. Given the nature and history of the rivalry, the contest is often heated.
- On November 30, 2013, Auburn and Alabama clashed in the 78th Iron Bowl. Auburn was the fourth-ranked team in the country; Alabama was the first. The stakes couldn't have been higher. The winner of the game would proceed to the SEC Championship and possibly on to the National Championship.
- Two-time defending National Champion Alabama was a 10-point favorite to win against Auburn. Auburn fell behind a few times during the game but managed to battle back and tie the game up late.
- Alabama had the ball with one second remaining on the clock. They opted to try a 57-yard field goal with the last play. This is what happened.

Play the Iron Bowl video referenced in the Resources section. Watch from 2:47-3:50.

- The play went down in history as "The Kick Six."
- Imagine the excitement of the Auburn team and fans. You've just beaten your rival in a legendary home game on a miracle 109-yard touchdown return. Fans are rushing to the field, relishing in the victory. The team is high-fiving and celebrating a massive win. Reporters with cameras in hand are frantically trying to capture the moment.

- Contrast that scene with another “touchdown” in history — the moment heaven touched down on earth.
- In a cold stable in a small town in a Roman-dominated province, a baby was born. To most people, there was nothing noticeable or remarkable – just some poor peasants with a new baby who weren’t fortunate enough to find a better housing situation.
- Yet, the baby lying in that manger was more worthy of celebration than every touchdown in every football game in history. That baby was God.
- As Catholics, we believe that God is a Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three divine persons are all completely God. God is all-powerful and all-knowing. He exceeds everything we could ever think of. He is over and above everything that exists. **(CCC 253-255) (Going Deeper #1: “The Trinity”)**
- We also believe in the Incarnation, which is the term we use to express the reality that the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, became man. In other words, God became one of us. **(CCC 461)**
- This point should not be too quickly passed over. The God of the universe, in a sense, took a step down. The Creator became a creature. Heaven came to earth.
- More than that, Jesus didn’t come to earth as a rich king or mighty ruler. He came as a baby.
- I don’t know if you’ve ever been around a newborn baby, but when you see one, you are struck by how little and helpless they are. These tiny creatures are completely reliant on their parents.
- The experience of being around babies helps highlight how wild the Incarnation is. Jesus didn’t just become a man (as if that wasn’t low enough for him to stoop already). He became a little baby. He became small, vulnerable, and needy.

Main Point 2:

Jesus knows all the struggles and difficulties, triumphs and joys of being human. He thought with a human mind, acted with a human will, and loved with a human heart.

- We profess belief in the Incarnation every Sunday. We believe that Jesus, the Son of God, was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. We profess that he became man for our sake. We say this, but getting our heads around it is hard.
- What do we mean when we say that God became man?
- We believe that Jesus was 100 percent God and 100 percent human. In other words, Jesus was like us in everything except sin. **(CCC 469) (Going Deeper #2: “The Hypostatic Union”)**
- Sometimes, it can be easy to write off Jesus’ humanity. We usually accept with ease that he was God, but that can make us overlook that he was human as well.

SCRIPTURE

Project and read **Hebrews 4:15** or invite a leadership teen to read it.

- Jesus experienced everything we do except sin. He knows what it's like to be hungry and thirsty. He has felt the loss of friends and loved ones and been driven to the point of tears. He got angry when he saw injustice. He was moved with compassion towards people who were hurting. **(CCC 470)**
- Jesus' life wasn't easy just because he was divine. In his humanity, he experienced similar struggles to those we sometimes feel in our relationship with God. He faced temptation. He was troubled and anxious about what God was asking of him, so much so that it caused him great distress. He had to overcome the same obstacles we do. He had to strive to align his human will with what God the Father was asking of him.
- Jesus faced everything we face and showed us how to be faithful to God in the midst of it. He was really a man, but he was the perfect man. Our model, example, and goal.
- By entering into the human experience, Jesus redeemed it. He came to earth to live the kind of life we do so that he could become a model for us, showing us how we ought to live. **(CCC 459)**
- We can look at how Jesus got angry, and it teaches us how, why, and to what extent we should get angry. We can see how he prayed and learn how we ought to. We can see how he trusted in God, and be encouraged to do the same.
- A popular acronym used to be plastered on wristbands years ago — WWJD, "What would Jesus do?" Christians would wear the bracelet to remind themselves to try to act like Jesus in every situation.
- This quaint saying gets to the heart of a profound reality. Because Jesus became man, we can be men and women like him. Following his example, we can actually do what Jesus would do. We can live our lives the way he lived his.

Main Point 3:

The Incarnation shows us how much God loves us and how close he desires to be to us. We do not worship a God who is far off but one who has come close.

Ask a few teens to share one of the nicest things they've ever heard of someone doing for someone else.

- Sometimes, humans are really good at caring for one another. In our best moments, our charity and love shine through, and we can give our lives for others.

- As great as humans can be, nothing we do could ever compare to what Jesus did for us. He humbled himself beyond imagination for our sake. No human can ever stoop as low as Jesus stooped for us. Saint Paul reminds us of this reality in one of his letters.

SCRIPTURE

Project and read **Philippians 2:5-11** or invite a leadership teen to read it.

- Saint Paul writes that Jesus “emptied himself” by becoming human. Jesus didn’t stop being God in the Incarnation, but he took on what it means to be a man. The great and glorious God of the universe became like you and me. The Church uses the word “kenosis” to talk about this reality. **(CCC 464)**
- Why would Jesus do this? Why would he humble himself? The answer is simple but hard to accept. He did it for us. **(CCC 457-460)**
- Jesus wanted us to be able to touch him, to see him. He wanted to draw close to us and be with us.
- Perhaps no one is more acquainted with Jesus’ humility than Mary, his mother.
- Ponder for a moment how absurd it must have been to care for a baby who was God and man. She fed this child. Changed his clothes. Tended to his wounds. Helped him learn to walk and speak. If anyone was shocked by the Incarnation, it should have been her.
- She knew what it meant for God to dwell in her midst. She also learned what it meant to dwell with God. Living with Jesus as a living, breathing, ordinary member of her family taught her how to dwell with God in the simplest and most mundane of moments.
- When we consider Mary’s experience, we encounter a marvelous truth. God doesn’t want to sit in heaven waiting to meet us. God wants to be in everything.
- One of the many names associated with Jesus is Emmanuel. It’s a Hebrew word that means “God with us.”
- The Incarnation reveals that God desires to be with and among us. He wants to be there when we cry. He is close when we are hungry, thirsty, and tired. He wants to be called to draw near in times of temptation and suffering.
- God has broken into the most mundane and ordinary events of the human experience. He’s come to meet you at the lunch table, while you’re doing homework, as you ride in the car, on the sports field, and everywhere else.
- In Jesus, God has indeed come to be with us. And the best news — the news worthy of a touchdown celebration — is that he will never leave.
- We experience his presence all around, through community, time in prayer and silence, nature, beauty, and many other ways, but most profoundly in the Eucharist.
- As Mass, the same Holy Spirit that overshadowed Mary at the Incarnation is at work again, making Jesus truly present.

- Adoration and Mass are privileged moments to be close to the one who came to earth for us. As he humbled himself in the Incarnation, he humbles himself every day in the appearance of bread just to be close to us.
- Take advantage of Jesus' presence. He has come to earth for you because he loves you and wants to be in communion with you. Draw near to him.
- Let Jesus be Emmanuel for you in this season. Ask him to show you how he is with you. Whatever you are going through, whatever you are facing, God desires to draw near to you in it.

BREAK + SEND

ADORATION 30 min

Transition to a prayer space, such as the church, chapel, or a special altar environment for this prayer experience. Give everyone a copy of the “God With Us” handout as they enter.

The priest or deacon exposes the Blessed Sacrament. After several moments of silence, begin this time of reflection by reading the following passage from the Gospel of John.

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 were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

John 1:1-5, 14

Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. He is God present here among us. As we sit in Adoration, use the handout you received to reflect on how God desires to be present to you. Spend some time in silence, just dwelling with Jesus. Ask Jesus to reveal how much he loves you and how he is present to you always, in every moment, place, and circumstance. Thank him for becoming human and dwelling among us.

Cue the priest, deacon, or other minister to begin Benediction when there are five minutes remaining in Adoration.

Conclude the experience with the short prayer on the following page.

*Jesus,
Thank you for being Emmanuel — God with us.
As you draw near to us, help us to be open and responsive to your presence.
Be with us in everything we do this week.
Stay close to us in times of suffering, temptation, and sadness.
Rejoice with us in moments of joy, consolation, and happiness.
Remind us of your closeness in the ordinary moments of life.
Help us to imitate you and love you always.
Amen.*

SUGGESTION

To tie in the Christmas season and help teens reflect on the mystery of the Incarnation, consider including a Nativity scene or empty creche at the foot of the altar.

ANNOUNCEMENTS 5 min

Invite the teens to continue to seek Jesus' presence in their day-to-day lives throughout the coming week. Make announcements for your program, then dismiss the teens.

AFTER THE LIFE NIGHT

Most core members are tired at the end of the session, but be sure to do two things upon the completion of a Life Night.

FIRST, CLEANUP

Try to foster a spirit of teamwork and generosity among your core team. One of the fastest ways to a divided core team is for one or two members to neglect cleanup. No one is done for the night until everyone is done cleaning up. If a core member is not helping clean up, presume goodwill on their part. If it becomes a consistent problem, address it with them rather than letting issues fester.

Be mindful of any relational ministry that may be happening or teens that need to talk. Sometimes, teens can be deeply moved by a Life Night and may need to continue to process with a trusted adult. During cleanup, your team should continue to be available and interruptible for any teens. You never want to shove teens out the door for the sake of cleaning up.

SECOND, EVALUATE

After all the teens have left, appreciate what God has accomplished through the Life Night. Share any praise reports. Identify who or what needs follow-up. Set a timer and invite the group to share in these five categories of the Life Night: Pros, Cons, Questions, Comments, and Concerns. Remind the core team that evaluations are intended to improve the teens' experiences at Life Teen and are not critical judgments of a youth minister's or core member's performance. As you discuss, encourage the core team to consider each of the Life Night movements of Gather, Proclaim, Break, and Send, or pass out/email the evaluation forms. Conclude your time together in prayer and praise to God.

LIFE NIGHT EVALUATION

On a scale of 1-10, how well did this Life Night accomplish the goal we set?

GOAL

The goal of this Life Night is to reflect on the mystery of the Incarnation to help teens understand how deeply God loves them and how close He desires to be to them.

Did not accomplish

Nailed it

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What was the strongest aspect of this Life Night?

Gather

Proclaim

Break + Send

Environment

Optional: Please explain further.

What kind of follow-up do we need to do after this Life Night?

What can we improve for future Life Nights? How can we accomplish this?
