

LIVING FAITH

December 25, 2023

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD-- CHRISTMAS

THE GOSPEL FOR TODAY

Luke 2:1-14

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.

He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

This will be a sign for you:

you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.'

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'



TALKING WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- In the first paragraph there are the names of 5 people. Find the names, then share with one another what you know about each of those people. (You might want to do the same thing with the place names in the same paragraph.)
- Who is Mary's "firstborn son"? Share with one another about him.
- Besides Mary, Joseph and their baby, who else is in this story? What do they do? Why are they in the story?
- Does anyone in the story remind you of yourself or someone you know? What is it about someone in the Christmas story that reminds you of yourself or someone you know?

A CHRISTMAS STORY

It was three days before Christmas. Richard Baillergeon's mother was busy with seasonal chores. She asked Richard to shine her good shoes for her. Shortly after, with the prideful smile that only a seven-year-old can muster Richard presented the shoes for inspection. Pleased with the results, his mother rewarded him with a quarter.

On Christmas day, as she put her shoes on to go to church, she noticed a lump in one shoe. Taking it off, she found a quarter wrapped in paper. Written on the paper in a child's scrawl were these words: "I done it for love."

CHRISTMAS SYMBOLS DID YOU KNOW?



Angels

Announced the glorious news of the Saviors birth.



Candle

Symbolizes the Lord's light upon the world.

Animals

They were close to Jesus at the time of his birth.



Candy Cane

Represents the shepherds crook. They used it to bring lambs back into the fold and it reminds us that we are all our brother keeper.



Bell

Lost sheep are found by the sound of the bell, it should ring to guide us back to our Heavenly Father. It reminds us that we are all are precious in the eyes of the Lord.



Christmas Cards

Just as the angels proclaimed Christ's birth to the shepherds, cards represent sending the word of Christ to all the world.



Bow/Ribbon

Represents the bonds of brotherly love. We are all children of God.

Christmas Tree

Symbolizes eternal life. Christ made it possible for us to live forever in heaven after we die.



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THE CHURCH TEACHES THOUGHTS ON CHRISTMAS ACROSS THE AGES

“... he chose to be born in a cold cavern without a fire to warm him. He chose to have the livestock’s manger for his cradle, and a little prickly straw for his bedding, in order that he might experience what poor people have to experience.”

- St. Alphonsus Liguori



“He was made flesh that we might be made God.” - St. Athanasius of Alexandria



“Our God chose to be born this way because he wanted to be loved.”

- St. Peter Chrysologus



“The teacher of children became himself a child among children, that he might instruct the unwise. The Bread of heaven came down to earth to feed the hungry.”

-Cyril of Jerusalem

“I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

The Son of God, in becoming human for our sake, might have appeared in the world at the age of a grown man, the way Adam appeared when he was created. But since children usually attract greater love to themselves from those who take care of them, Jesus chose to appear on earth as an infant; and as the poorest and most miserable infant ever born.

- St. Alphonsus Liguori



“We consider Christmas as the encounter, the great encounter, the historical encounter, the decisive encounter, between God and mankind. Those who have faith know this truly; let them rejoice.”

-Pope Paul VI



“Christmas is joy, religious joy, an inner joy of light and peace.”

-Pope Francis



“This day He who Is, is Born; and He who is becomes what He was not.”

- St. John Chrysostom





THE LEGEND OF THE FIRST CHRISTMAS TREE

An evergreen sprang from the centre of an oak cut down by **St. Boniface**. The oak symbolized paganism, and its death brought an end to the old ways. The new tree was **“the sign of endless life, for its leaves are evergreen.”** St. Boniface took this as a sign of the Christian faith.

HISTORY

11TH CENTURY

During Advent, religious plays were performed around Europe. There was always a tree on stage, decorated with red apples, to symbolize the Tree of Paradise.

15TH CENTURY

The faithful began displaying paradise trees in their homes on December 24, the feast of Adam and Eve.

16TH CENTURY

Decorated standing trees became popular in Germany and France. Immigrants brought the tradition to America, but the custom was not popular until the 19th century.

18TH CENTURY

The Christmas tree tradition started in Canada.

Oh,
Christmas
Tree!

The decorating of the Christmas tree offers an opportunity for family prayer.



The Christmas tree reminds us of:

- the tree planted in the centre of Eden
- the tree of the Cross



PRAYER:

We praise you for the beauty of this tree: may its evergreen branches remind us of your unending care for all people; may its lights illumine the darkness of the winter nights; may its presence bring cheer and hope for all people. Amen.



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