

The Birth of Jesus

Grace: *Ask for the grace to better know and understand Jesus so that your love for Jesus will grow and your desire to imitate him will increase.*

Introduction:

Imagine how the birth of Jesus took place. You are about to meet Jesus for the first time. Prepare to watch Jesus coming into the world as an innocent defenseless child. Place yourself into the scene and journey with the Holy Family as they prepare for Jesus' birth.

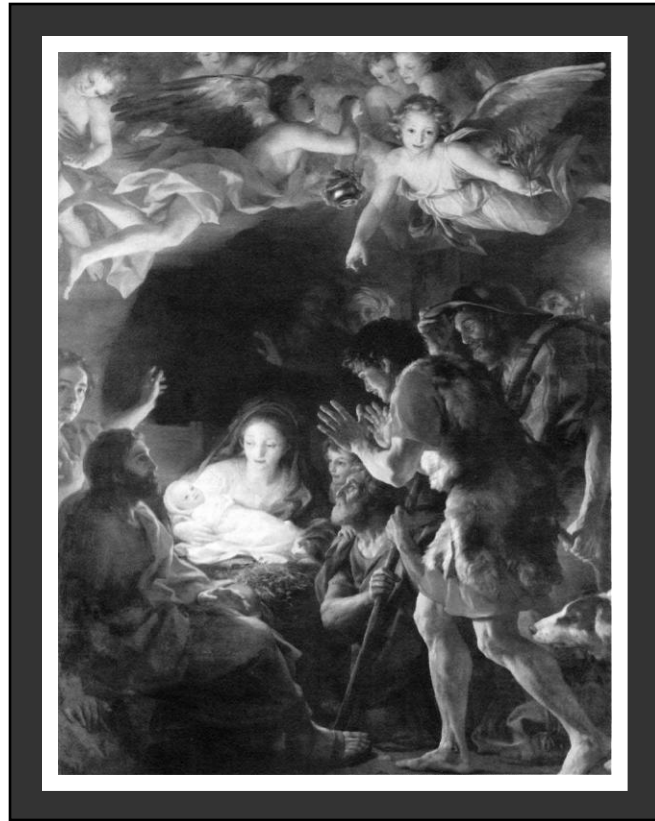
You may want to imagine what it was like to be Joseph as he and Mary frantically looked for a place to stay. What was Mary's attitude like and what did she say to Joseph? You may want to imagine being one of the Shepherds who come to visit Jesus. How do you respond to this little child? How does this little child respond to you?


Take your time praying with this passage. Let it develop and meditate for a couple of minutes with any phrase that stands out to you. It may take some time and work to become involved with Mary, Joseph, and Jesus as they experience the Nativity. What feelings stir inside of you the first moment

that you see Jesus? Imagine the story from multiple perspectives. Imagine what feelings Joseph may have had about Mary's pregnancy. How does Jesus' presence speak to Joseph's concerns? How does Mary respond to Jesus' birth? Can you imagine Mary telling the story about how they found the stable? How does she describe her experience of the first time that she holds Jesus?

Perhaps you dare to imagine holding Jesus. What thoughts and feelings come to mind as you hold the infant Jesus? How would you feel about putting your firstborn child in a feed trough because that was the only place there was room? How often does God's plan for you involve paths that you might not have chosen for your self or even inconveniences? How do you react to God's direction in your life? What does Mary and Joseph's reaction have to teach you about responding to God's action in your life?

You may choose to be one of the shepherds. Describe the field and how you felt that evening. How did you react to hearing the heavenly choir singing praises to God? How did you find the place where Jesus was? What thoughts and feelings did you experience as you look at Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus? How do they respond to your presence? How are you called to share with others that experience of encountering Jesus?





Luke 2:1-21 The Birth of Jesus

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

I am like the cave of Jesus' birth.
A mound of rock groaning to form,
perhaps over thousands of years,
slowly, slowly.
Winds, earthquakes
floods of life
carving me out,
making me hollow,
leaving me empty.

I am an imperfect place
dark, dank, dire, dirty.
An empty space,
waiting, waiting, waiting.
Yearning,
for Jesus to be borne to me
to be born in me.

God's grace,
astonishingly,
still chooses me,
this empty imperfect cave,
as a place for his confinement.

How can this be
that the Lord my God
comes to me?
It is because of
who you are
not who I am.

Carved through the toil of his hands,
this cave has become
a place chosen
to provide warmth, shelter, safety
room
to welcome the Holy Family.
I wrap myself,
all that I am and have,
around them.

Thank you Holy Family
for coming in.
Thank you for filling my vacantness,
transforming the hard,
unmoving rock of my being
into a place filled with fire,
brimming with the activity of God
bringing hope to my world
bursting with the love of God himself.

Thank you, Mary,
my much beloved,
for bringing him to my emptiness
and laboring to birth him here.
Thank you Joseph,
for choosing me as a safe haven
for your family.

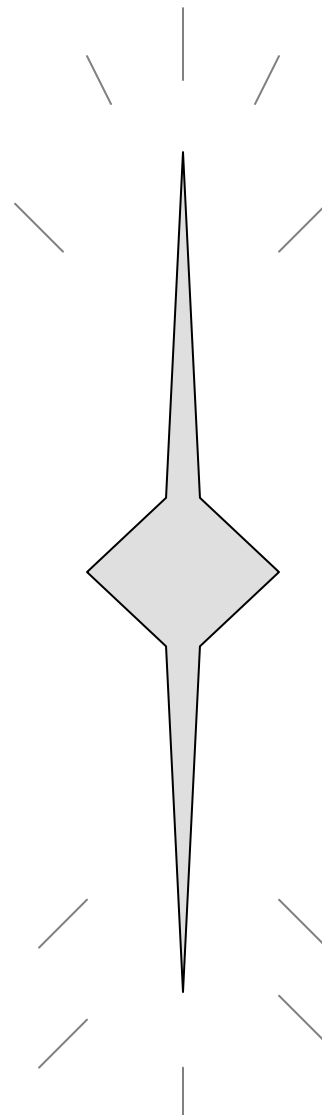
Come baby Jesus
be born here.
Grow.
Learn to love in my heart
for that is the only way I,
an empty cave,
can learn to love.

Thank you Jesus,
for birthing yourself in me.
Thank you, Lord Jesus
for making your home
in my heart.

Welcome.

The Cave
one person's experience

In these or similar words ... I imagine the couple jogging around looking for a shelter just as the sun is going down. Joseph is walking in front along the roads asking people on the street if they have a place to offer. Mary is on a camel behind him with no one holding her hand. It's a really cold night and we can see her breath and the breath coming out of the camel's nose. Despite the cold, her hand feels normal. When we finally see an abandoned wood shed, we are ecstatic. Mary is kind of going into contractions and I can see the pain in her face, but she is trying to hold on. She knows Joseph is doing his best just to find them a shelter. When he opens the double doors to the shed, a whole bunch of dust and particles fall down. When Jesus is born after what seems like hours, I just kind of stare at Him in amazement because He somehow is completely normal and crying and fussing, but at the same time he has this aura of peace about Him that makes the cold, dust, and smell all go away. Out of nowhere these shepherds show up and I laugh because they get on their knees and praise this tiny little divine being. It's inspiring the way I can feel the animals, the shepherds, the angels and everyone stopping for a second and adoring this little kid. Mary and Joseph's response to God's call is the perfect example of how I should respond to God's call.



Practicing What You Preach ... To grow in your appreciation for the great joy that new life brings, spend some time with family or friends looking at baby pictures of you and your family. Ask to hear the stories surrounding the birth of those in your family. By participating in Jesus' life story, you are fostering a similar intimacy with Jesus and His family.