



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

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*Do not be afraid; for see,
I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people. (Luke 2:1-16)*

This reading from Luke may be the best-known passage in all the gospels for most Christians. In many parishes, it is proclaimed at all the Masses of Christmas. It is a familiar story, evoking warm memories of Christmases past.

Yet Luke has given us here a masterpiece of theological insights about Jesus. Almost everything in the scene he paints has deeper significance. The passage contains many references to themes that are important to Luke: food, grace, joy, lowliness, peace, salvation and the universal scope of salvation.

Also notable is the reference of Caesar Augustus, who was known in the secular world as the bringer of peace. But Luke makes clear that Jesus is the real Prince of Peace proclaiming the universal significance of his birth.

The child is wrapped in swaddling clothes, just as every Jewish child was, a reminder that he shares our life completely. He is laid in a manger, a very improbable place to put a newborn, as a symbol that he is food for us (Eucharist). The lack of space in the inn points to the frequent rejection of Jesus in his lifetime and of his message ever since. The angels appear to shepherds, who by their occupation were unable to fulfill the purification ritual demands of the law and were among the poorest of society, reminding us of Christ's special love for the poor and the lowly.

Take time out of your busy schedule this week to reflect using your "*holy imagination*" to visualize the Nativity of Jesus Christ as if you were hearing the story for the first. Ignatian Contemplation, also called holy imagination, is the meeting of God through this story within Holy Scripture. This special type of prayer develops as you "*live into*" a Scripture story with all your senses and imagination. Let the Spirit guide your prayer: Let it happen to you, within you, and around you.

Let every aspect of the story be given deep reflection as you call down the Holy Spirit to hover about you, in wonder and awe, so that God lift you outside of time into the eternal Creation where "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 favors!"*

Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

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 Savior,
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 favors!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,

*"Let us go now to Bethlehem
and see this thing that has taken place,
which the Lord has made known to us."*

So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.