

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Pause a while to reflect on the events and people concerned in the miracle of the birth of Jesus Christ as told in The Bible.

STATION 1 : THE ANNUNCIATION

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, '*Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.*' '*Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.*'



Domenico Veneziano c. 1445

Then Mary said to the angel, '*Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.*' Then the angel departed from her. (*Luke's gospel, chapter 1, verses 26-31, 38*)

Heavenly Father, as we recall the miracle of Jesus' nativity, free our minds from the day's concerns and fill us with the peace and hope of Advent. Just as Mary accepted your call, help us to be open to your purposes and have the courage to accept. Amen

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STATION 2 : THE VISITATION

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.



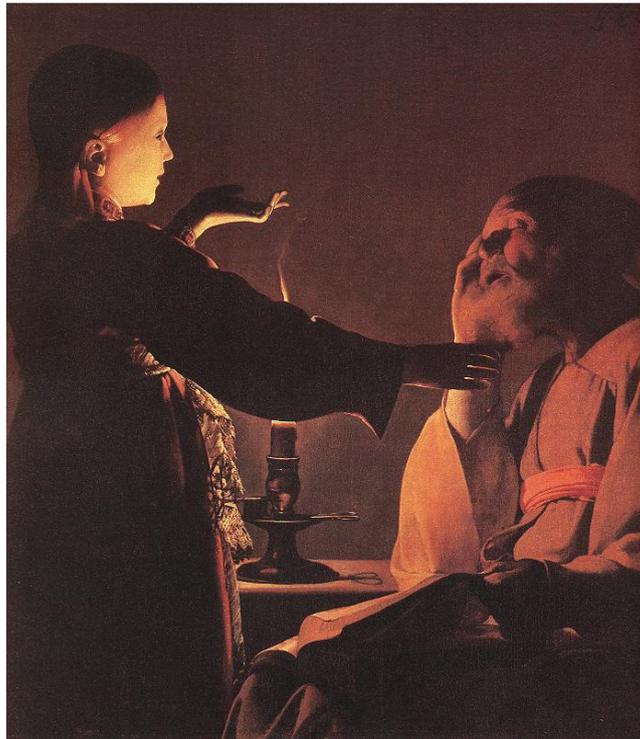
When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, *"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."* (Luke's gospel, chapter 1, verses 39-45)

Mary, though alone and puzzled, trusted God, and joyfully shared her news with Elizabeth, who expecting a child in old age, affirmed God's faithfulness. This Advent as we wait for Christ's coming, help us too, O Lord, not to waver on our faith journey, but with humble courage to be open to your presence and find strength in the signs of your love shown though the people we meet and experiences day by day. Amen

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STATION 3 : ANGEL VISITS JOSEPH

Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.



But an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew's gospel, chapter 1, verses 18-21)

Joseph in humility accepted the angel's message, though it searched his heart. Dear God, you search us out and know us, help us in faithful obedience to trust when you lead us on to new understandings of your will and purpose for the world you have made and love. Amen

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STATION 4 : JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM

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 Quirinus was governor of Syria. All went to their own town 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. *(Luke's gospel, chapter 2, verses 1-5)*

Lord, you lead us along right paths. As we journey through Advent to our Bethlehem, the holy place to which the star guides us, prepare us for your coming: renew us in our faith and inspire our church with vision and hope; teach us peace and reconciliation instead of injustice and hostility; compassion and love for those in need, friend or stranger. Amen

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STATION 5 : BIRTH OF JESUS

Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem. 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. (Luke's gospel, chapter 2, verses 4, 5-7)

Lord, you came in poverty and lowliness to a needy world. Help us to pray with compassion for all who are homeless, all refugees, all who hunger, all who live in poverty, the persecuted, the lonely and unloved. Thank you for our families, those who care for us, the safe places we call 'home'. Amen

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STATION 6 : ANGELS TELL SHEPHERDS

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!"

(Luke's gospel chapter 2, verses 8-14)

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STATION 7 : SHEPHERDS FIND JESUS

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. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.



But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

(Luke's gospel chapter 2, verses 15 - 20)

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STATION 8 : THE WISE MEN FIND JESUS

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "*Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.*"



When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

(Matthew's gospel, chapter 2, verses 1-2,10-12)