

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)



Many Christmas liturgies include a telling of the lineage of Jesus. At first glance, it might be hard to understand why this is all that interesting, aside from it establishing his inherited right to the throne of Israel. However, as we consider our own recovery, we realize that where we come from has a strong influence on who we are today, including our relationship with God and others.

The Gospel Reading for the Christmas Vigil Mass reminds us that where we come from matters, although where we are going matters more. As we proclaim in our meetings, we do not gather to dwell on the past—particularly the shame of our old patterns—but rather focus on developing the appropriate attitudes and behaviors for living this particular day successfully. The incarnation of Jesus brings new life to the world and makes that possible.

The Gospel then turns to the story of Joseph. Upon learning that Mary was pregnant, Joseph plans to “divorce her quietly.” But a messenger from God, an angel, appears to him in a dream and drastically changes his perspective, leading him to become the adoptive father of God. What an order! When we reached rock bottom, we might have hit a point where we saw our lives going nowhere—a point of hopelessness. At a certain time, we came to realize that we needed to ask for help. When we do, it changes our lives and outlook forever. Our “yes” at that moment is similar to Joseph’s “yes” to the angel.

The angel tells Joseph that the child shall be named Emmanuel, meaning God is with us. Those of us in recovery may have had similar experiences when, after admitting our powerlessness and asking for God’s help, we suddenly experienced Jesus with us as a personal God and not some distant deity. That is the true beauty of Christmas. The God of the universe lowered Himself to be with us out of love and mercy. The Christmas Vigil Gospel Reading reminds us that, despite where we come from or where we’ve been in our lives, we are invited to encounter the living God made flesh and make for Him a dwelling place in our hearts.

We have been preparing to make room for Jesus throughout the season of Advent and can carry many of these practices with us into the Christmas season and new year. Peace, hope, joy, and love are themes that can be integrated into our lives each day. Gathering with a fellowship of men who know our condition and continue to seek freedom rooted in a relationship with Christ helps develop a dwelling place for our Lord.

Reflection Questions

The Gospel of Matthew details the patience and trust of both Joseph and Mary. It was needed to withstand the early stages of their family's journey:

*When Herod had died, behold,
the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream
to Joseph in Egypt and said,
“Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land
of Israel,
for those who sought the child’s life are dead.”
He rose, took the child and his mother,
and went to the land of Israel.
But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over
Judea
in place of his father Herod,
he was afraid to go back there.
And because he had been warned in a dream,
he departed for the region of Galilee.
He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth,
so that what had been spoken through the prophets
might be fulfilled,
He shall be called a Nazorean.*

Joseph is consistent and reliable, leading the way for his family and providing their protection. Mary takes on the role of nurturing Mother for her newborn son and for the world. As we anticipate the coming of our Lord, we can be guided by the Holy Family, the communion of Saints, and our recovery fellowship so that we may endure with patient hope and trust.

- Similar to Joseph, have there been moments when God changed your perspective and life? How?
- How has God spoken to you?
- What about Jesus’ incarnation gives you hope?
 - How might this hope nourish your recovery as you head into the Christmas season?

CIR Christmas Marathon Meeting

The Catholic in Recovery community will be available around the clock for those needing to connect with others this Christmas

- Marathon will begin with our daily Eleventh Step Morning Meditation Meeting at 8a ET Christmas Eve and will conclude at 10p ET Christmas Day
- Connect any time day or night via phone or Zoom:
 - Zoom Meeting ID: 841 9988 9323
 - Passcode: 121212 | Dial in: (669) 900-6833

Christmas Vigil Mass Readings

First Reading: Isaiah 62:1-5

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29

Second Reading: Acts 13:16-17, 22-25

Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25