



The birth of Jesus

Jesus comes to earth to bring us the joy and peace of heaven

Introduction

4 *By saying "yes" to what God asked of her, Mary welcomed into herself the Son of God who, by being born here on earth, wants all men and women to form one family.*

5 *God loves everyone, even those who are furthest from Him, rich and poor, wise and simple.*

6 *God has spoken and guided his people many times,*

7 *but now the time has come to speak to humankind through his Son: Jesus (1).*

8 *Jesus is about to be born, but He cannot be received in the little house in Nazareth where the angel appeared. Mary and Joseph must set out for Bethlehem.*

.....
9 **A very beautiful story - The Bible**

10 **Birth of Jesus** (Cf. Lk 2,1-20)

11 We are in Bethlehem, a small town where the family of Joseph, Mary's husband, came from. The emperor who ruled at that time wanted to count all the inhabitants of his kingdom and had ordered everyone to go and register in the town where their family came from.

12 So, Joseph and Mary also had to set out on their journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. And now the lights of Bethlehem can be seen in the distance!

13 Mary is tired, the journey has been long, and her Child is about to be born.

14 Behold, the Child is born! In Bethlehem, in a stable, because there was no room for them in the inn.

15 Mary carefully wraps Him in swaddling clothes and lays Him on the straw bed that Joseph has prepared for Him.

16 It is dark outside. Not far from there, some shepherds are spending the night in the open air, guarding their flocks.

17 But what happens? The angel of the Lord has appeared and His light envelops them all. Filled with fear they look up to heaven. But the angel says to them: "Do not be afraid! I bring you good news: today, in Bethlehem, the city of David, the Saviour, the Christ, the Lord, is born to you! This is how you will recognise Him: you will find a Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.

A very beautiful story

God accompanies us from creation to 'new heavens and new earth' (Episode 6)

18 Now heaven is full of angels praising God with this song: ...
... "Glory to God in heaven and on earth peace to those He loves".

19 The shepherds say to each other: "Let us go, let us go to Bethlehem! Let us go and see what has happened".

20 They ran along the road, and there was the stable...they found Mary, Joseph, and the Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, in the manger: just as the angel had said! The shepherds do not dare to speak out loud. Everything is so beautiful! They stand there looking and are as happy as they have ever been!

21 They go back and tell many people about this Child and all that they have seen and heard... everyone listens in amazement to their story! Mary, Joseph and the shepherds know that this is not a Child like all the others: it is Jesus, the Son of God (2).

22 The Three Kings (cf. Mt 2:1-12)

23 At the time of Jesus' birth, there was a king in Jerusalem whose name was Herod.

24 One day, in his palace, some wise men from far away, from the East, came to him and asked: "Where is this Child, recently born, the King of the Jews? We saw His star appear in the East and have come here to honour Him".

25 On hearing of another king, Herod was greatly frightened, for he was the king: King Herod! He summoned the chief priests and the wise men of his kingdom and asked them, "Where should this King be born?" The wise men answer, "The holy books say He is in Bethlehem!"

26 Then Herod said to the three wise men: "Go and look for Him..... then let me know where He is, so that I too may go and honour Him".

27 The three men set out again and... "There is the star!" exclaimed one of them and their hearts were filled with joy.

28 The star went ahead of them,

29 until it came and stopped above the place where the Child was: thus, they found Mary with little Jesus. How beautiful it is! The wise men knelt down in front of Him and adored Him... Then they opened their caskets and, full of love and respect, they offered Him their gifts:

30 ... gold, ...

31 ... frankincense and...

32 ...myrrh. These are precious gifts from their distant countries.

33 Then, when the three wise men are on their way back, God warns them in a dream not to let Herod know where Jesus is, and they return to their countries by another route... (3)

34 A very beautiful story - The Bible

35 *Jesus came to make everyone happy: a little one with Mary and Joseph, who looked after Him with so much love, many came to see him: from nearby simple people, like the shepherds,*

36 *from far away countries wise people, like the Magi.*

37 *Jesus wants to bring the joy of Heaven to everyone on earth!*

.....

38 **Let us live like this**

39 "The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for what they had seen and heard" (Lk 2:20).

40 "If Jesus came among us to bring us joy, we too must give joy to our brothers and sisters. -Chiara" (C. Lubich, in Gen4 n. 10-11-12 October-November-December 1983, p.3)

41 **Bring happiness to those who are sad**

Michel goes to school. During recess, everyone ran into the playground.

42 Jean-Pierre stays at his desk. It was his first day at the school. He doesn't know anyone... He has just arrived in Belgium, his father has come there to look for a job. Michel saw that he was lonely... Jean-Pierre couldn't speak their language yet, and he didn't know anyone!

43 Michel goes up to him and shows him his drawing book.

44 The next day, Michel would like to let Jean-Pierre play with the other children...

45 He goes down to the playground and goes to the "ringleader" Roger to ask him if Jean-Pierre can play with them. Roger doesn't want to let him play... But Michel explains to him: "Jean-Pierre is homesick. He doesn't know anyone here... And who knows, maybe he'll teach us some new games from his country!"

46 Roger was convinced and said yes.

47 Michel happily ran to call him. From that day on, Jean-Pierre began to have many friends.

48 **Let us live like this**

51 **How beautiful to bring the love of Jesus**

Alicia has many friends at school. She likes to help everyone and often lends her things to her classmates.

52 One day they ask her: "But why do you share your things with everyone?". Alicia says: "If you want to know my secret...I will bring it to you tomorrow!".

53 The next day she brings the dice of love to school and tells them how to use it. "That's what you do every morning," Alicia says, she throws it and explains the phrases on the dice. Then she continues: "By doing this we love everyone as Jesus did". Everyone is very happy, and asks Alicia if she can play this game all the time.

54 Now in her class every morning they throw the dice of love and try to live out all the aspects of love as they are on the dice.

55 Gen4

Notes

1 "In Jesus Christ, God has come to us... he joins us in our humanity... he joins each one, each one of us in our uniqueness. God has not only looked down on us from above, he has come down, he has come among us". (Original text : "En Jésus-Christ Dieu s'est approché de nous...il nous rejoint dans notre humanité...il rejoint chacune, chacun d'entre nous dans ce que nous avons d'unique. Dieu n'a pas seulement jeté un regard d'en haut sur nous, il est descendu, il est venu." - Translated from the book by Barraud, Daniel and others, Dieu s'approche: un catéchisme protestant en 25 tableaux, Genève: Labor et Fides; Arare-Genève: PBU, 1998, p 18).

2 Some insights from the richness of the theology of the **Eastern Orthodox Churches**, edited by Sherin H. Salama: Reflections on Christmas by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III: "Beautiful is this name by which Jesus was called at his birth, Emmanuel, God is with us. (...) The blessing of Christmas is this: to feel that Christ is God with us, God is in our midst, he dwells with us and dwells in us. God loves people very much indeed; his joy is in the children of men and women. He loves to give humankind the pleasure of being with him, and he loves the human heart as a place to live.

Ever since man was created, He created him in His own image and likeness. And He wanted to make him a place to dwell, He wanted to dwell in man's heart and remain in him.

Thousands of years have passed and our good God is trying to find a place in humankind, a suitable place to dwell. (...)

God looks at your heart and says: "This is the place of my rest forever. Here I live, because I desire it" (Psalm 132: 14).

St Cyril the Great says: "Someone might ask and say: Christ was a baby wrapped in a simple sash and lying in a manger, so why did the heavenly forces honour him as God and Lord?"

O man, deepen your understanding of the Great Mystery. God appeared as you appear and took the human body from a slave, but his divinity was not separated from Him in any way. Do you not understand that the Only-Begotten Son of God became incarnate and was pleased to be born of a woman out of love for us, to cast out the curse that befell the first woman, when she was told, "In sorrow shall thou bring forth children" (Genesis 3:16)! Emmanuel the Incarnate, having been born of a woman, the bond of the curse was dissolved with her!"

3 Some insights from the rich theology of the **Eastern Orthodox Churches**, by Sherin H. Salama: Father Gregory the Great says: Gold is offered as royal tribute, incense is offered to God and myrrh is used in embalming the bodies of the dead. This is the reason why the Magi declared with their secret gifts, to those who worship Him, with gold that He is the King, and with frankincense that He is God, and with myrrh that He accepts death ... We present the new born Lord with gold, thus confessing that He reigns in every place, and we offer Him frankincense as we believe that God has appeared in time, even though He is before all time. We offer myrrh, believing that even though it is not possible to suffer in His divinity, He has become mortal in our bodies. And with these signs we can also understand something else: gold symbolises wisdom, as Solomon testifies, and the incense that is burnt before God symbolises the power of prayer, as the psalm says: "Let my prayer be straightened as incense before you" (Psalm 141: 2), and myrrh symbolises the death of our bodies, as the holy Church says to her workers who do what God does unto death (...). We offer the new King gold if we shine with the

A very beautiful story

God accompanies us from creation to 'new heavens and new earth' (Episode 6)

light of heavenly wisdom in His eyes, and we offer Him frankincense if we burn the thoughts of the flesh on the altar of our hearts, then we raise a good fragrance to God with our heavenly desires. We offer Him myrrh when we kill the evil (desires) of the body with asceticism, so we say that it is with myrrh that we protect the dead body from corruption.

56 End