
The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) Vigil Mass

Friday, December 25, 2020

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| <u>Readings & Background</u> |
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First Reading

Isaiah 62:1-5

The Lord delights in his people.

Responsorial Psalm

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

The goodness of the Lord is praised.

Second Reading

Acts of the Apostles 13:16-17, 22-25

God chose the people of Israel, and from them he raised up Jesus, the Saviour for all people.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 1:1-25 (or the shorter form, Matthew 1:18-25)

After being visited by an angel in a dream, Joseph takes Mary as his wife.

Background on the Gospel Reading

Today's liturgy offers the option to read a longer or shorter form of the Gospel. If we read the longer form, **we hear Matthew recount the ancestry of Jesus.** This genealogy sets Jesus' birth within the context of the history of Israel, highlighting two of Jesus' ancestors—**Abraham, the father of the Hebrew people, and David, the most important king of Israel.** Jesus' ancestral lineage reinforces a central theme of Matthew's Gospel: Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies made to the people of Israel.

The Gospel of Matthew tells the story of the birth of Jesus from Joseph's perspective.

During his betrothal to Mary, Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant. Betrothal in first-century Jewish culture was more than an engagement period; it was part of the marriage contract. A breach of this contract was considered adultery. If adultery was proved, the punishment might be death. Joseph had rights under Mosaic Law, but he chose to act discreetly in his plans to break the marriage contract so as to protect Mary. The way that Joseph and Mary faced these extraordinary circumstances tells us much about these holy people and their faith in God.

The message the angel gave to Joseph in a dream reveals many important theological details about the child Mary will bear and about the child's role in God's plan. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. His name will be Jesus, which in the Hebrew means "God saves." He will be the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. He will be Emmanuel, "God with us." This is the mystery we celebrate at Christmas, the Incarnation. God chose to become a human being in the person of Jesus.

Joseph did as the angel of the Lord directed. He took Mary to be his wife and accepted the child in her womb as his own. When Jesus was born, Joseph followed the directions of the angel and gave the child the name Jesus. We often recall Mary's cooperation in God's plan for our salvation. Today's Gospel reminds us of Joseph's important role, which was also crucial to God's plan for Jesus' birth.



The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) - At the Vigil Mass Readings

FIRST READING Is 62:1-5

For Zion's sake I will not be silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her vindication shines forth like the dawn and her victory like a burning torch. Nations shall behold your vindication, and all the kings your glory; you shall be called by a new name pronounced by the mouth of the LORD. You shall be a glorious crown in the hand of the LORD, a royal diadem held by your God. No more shall people call you "Forsaken," or your land "Desolate," but you shall be called "My Delight," and your land "Espoused."
For the LORD delights in you and makes your land his spouse.
As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride so shall your God rejoice in you.
The word of the Lord.

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

R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to David my servant:

Forever will I confirm your posterity
and establish your throne for all generations.

R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

Blessed the people who know the joyful shout;
in the light of your countenance, O LORD, they walk.

At your name they rejoice all the day,
and through your justice they are exalted.

R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

He shall say of me, "You are my father,
my God, the rock, my saviour."

Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him,
and my covenant with him stands firm.

R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

SECOND READING Acts 13:16-17, 22-25

When Paul reached Antioch in Pisidia and entered the synagogue, he stood up, motioned with his hand, and said,

"Fellow Israelites and you others who are God-fearing, listen.

The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and exalted the people during their sojourn in the land of Egypt. With uplifted arm he led them out of it.

Then he removed Saul and raised up David as king; of him he testified,

'I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart;

he will carry out my every wish.'

From this man's descendants God, according to his promise, has brought to Israel a saviour, Jesus.

John heralded his coming by proclaiming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel; and as John was completing his course, he would say,

'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. Behold, one is coming after me; I am not worthy to unfasten the sandals of his feet.'"

Alleluia

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Tomorrow the wickedness of the earth will be destroyed:
the Saviour of the world will reign over us.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Matthew 1:1-25

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham became the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob,

Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.

Judah became the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar.

Perez became the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram,

Ram the father of Amminadab. Amminadab became the father of Nahshon,

Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab.

Boaz became the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth.

Obed became the father of Jesse, Jesse the father of David the king.

David became the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah.

Solomon became the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah,

Abijah the father of Asaph. Asaph became the father of Jehoshaphat,

Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father of Uzziah.

Uzziah became the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz,

Ahaz the father of Hezekiah.

Hezekiah became the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amos,

Amos the father of Josiah. Josiah became the father of Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the Babylonian exile.

After the Babylonian exile, Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel,

Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abiud.

Abiud became the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor,

Azor the father of Zadok.

Zadok became the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud,

Eliud the father of Eleazar. Eleazar became the father of Matthan,

Matthan the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary.

Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ.

Thus, the total number of generations from Abraham to David is fourteen generations;

from David to the Babylonian exile, fourteen generations;

from the Babylonian exile to the Christ, fourteen generations.

Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about.

When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit.

Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly.

Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home.

For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet:

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means "God is with us."

When Joseph awoke,

he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) Vigil Mass Family Connection

Knowing your family history is important in establishing your identity.

The longer form of today's Gospel lists many of the ancestors of Jesus and serves to establish Jesus' place in the history of Israel. Many important figures from the Hebrew Scriptures are named in this genealogy: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Jesse, David, and Solomon, among many others. From among these names, however, two are highlighted: ***Abraham, the father of the Israelites because of God's promise to raise from his descendants a great nation, and David, the king who united the tribes of Israel and from whose descendants the Messiah would arise.***

After you gather as a family, talk about the ***importance of your family's history.***

Recall where your ancestors came from.

Tell some important stories from your family's history.

In today's Gospel, we hear about Jesus' ancestors.

Read today's Gospel, Matthew 1:1-25.

Which names do you recognize from Hebrew Scripture?

What do you know about these people?

From this family history, ***we learn that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to raise up a saviour from the people of Israel.***

Conclude in prayer together thanking God for the gift of our Saviour, Jesus, who saves us from our sins.

Sing together one or more favourite Christmas hymns.

Pray together the ***Glory Be to the Father.***