



St. Catherine's Academy Gazette

Holy Mother Church has dedicated this month to the
Nativity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

Issue 41

December 2014

SEE, HE COMES

Feasts and Fasts This Month

Immaculate Conception of the
B.V.M. ~ Dec. 8th

O.L. of Guadalupe ~ Dec. 12th

Ember Days ~ Dec. 17,19 and 20

Christmas Day ~ Dec. 25th

December 16th is the day to begin
a Novena to the Infant Jesus.
(on the last page of this Gazette)

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See, He comes! whom every nation,
Taught of God, desired to see;
Filled with hope and expectation,
That He would their Saviour be.
Sing, oh! sing with exultation,
Haste we to our Father's home;
Peace, redemption, joy, salvation,
Now from Heaven to earth are come.

See, He comes! whom kings and sagas,
Prophets, patriarchs of old,
Distant climes, and countless ages,
Waited eager to behold.
Sing, oh! sing with exultation,
Haste we to our Father's home;
Peace, redemption, joy, salvation,
Now from Heaven to earth are come.

See the Lamb of God appearing,
God of God, from Heaven above!
See the Heavenly Bridegroom cheering
His dear Bride with words of love!
Glory to the Eternal Father,
Glory to the Incarnate Son,
Glory to the Holy Spirit,
Glory to the Three in One!

Source: Hymns and Songs for Catholic Children, 1870

DID YOU KNOW:**THE FIRST FESTAL CYCLE ~ ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS**

1. The first festal cycle is the Christmas season. It begins with the first Sunday of Advent, and closes with the Saturday preceding Septuagesima Sunday; its central point is the feast of Christmas. Advent forms its remote preparation, its proximate preparation is Christmas Eve. The immediate subsequent commemoration extends from the feast of St. Stephen, until Epiphany, the remote subsequent commemoration from Epiphany to Septuagesima.

2. The main thought of this festal cycle is the birth of Christ. Advent shows the longing and preparation in the Old Law for the coming Messiah, which finally attains its object in the birth of Christ. Christmas shows us the Messiah as He reveals Himself to mankind, and proclaims His kingdom. The Christian should prove himself in Advent, and endeavor to gain greater purity of heart. At Christmas he should renew his resolution to live only for Jesus, and to become more like unto Him, and in the time following he should endeavor to enliven and confirm his faith.

1. The word Advent comes from the Latin and means "The coming." The four weeks preceding Christmas are so called because they are set apart by the Church to prepare for the coming of Christ.
2. With great longing, the world, for four thousand years, waited for the coming of the Redeemer. God, Himself, nourished this longing by repeated prophetic promises, which became more distinctly clear as the time of fulfillment approached. The universal misery in which mankind then languished increased this longing for the Redeemer. These four thousand years are typified by the four weeks before Christmas. The longing for the Messiah, announced by the prophets, is partly expressed in the Rorate Masses, but more especially so in the Divine Office, which becomes more and more beseeching as the feast of Christmas approaches. The penance which we are exhorted to practice during this time is symbolical of the misery of sin.
3. The Church wishes to awaken this longing and penitential spirit in the hearts of the faithful, in order to prepare them for the advent of the Redeemer.

Therefore:

- (1) Solemnization of marriage is forbidden during this time, so that the solemnity of the season may not be disturbed by noisy pleasures.
 - (2) The violet color used at Mass is to remind us that heaven closed against sinners, can be opened again by penance.
 - (3) The Gloria is omitted on those days on which no feast falls.
 - (4) The preaching of St. John the Baptist in the Gospels, and the exhortations of St. Paul in the Epistles of the Sundays of Advent, as well as the fast days of this time, point distinctly to penance. These fast days are all the Fridays of Advent, the Ember days, and the Vigil of Christmas.
4. The severity of penance is, however, moderated by a glance at Mary, who appears as the Rosy Dawn to gradually dispel the darkness of sin. Therefore the joyous feast of

the Immaculate Conception is celebrated in the midst of this penitential season. Throughout the Breviary and the prayers of the Mass, Mary, the Mother of the Redeemer, is often referred to as the Rosy Aurora of our Redemption, especially so in the Rorate Masses sung at early dawn. The feast of the Expectation on the 8th of December should arouse increased devotion and longing, for the coming Messiah.

The Rorate Masses take their name from the Introit of the Mass, frequently used during Advent, which begins with Rorate Coeli (drop down dew ye heavens). They are also called Masses of the Angel, because the Gospel of these Masses relates to the Annunciation of the Mystery of the Incarnation to the Blessed Virgin.

5. In order to keep Advent in a befitting manner the Christian should:

1st. Awaken a penitential spirit and practice works of penance,—he should endeavor to conquer at least one prominent fault and to cultivate or practice some particular virtue.

2nd. He should devote himself to prayer, and have a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and

3rd. Have a great longing for the birth of the Christ Child in his heart.

6. Even in the first centuries the faithful prepared themselves for the coming of Christ mas by a long season of prayer and fasting, but Advent was not definitely fixed until the fifth and sixth centuries.

7. The following important feasts fall in Advent:

(1) The Feast of St. Andrew the Apostle, which was celebrated in the earliest times. This Apostle stands conspicuous at the entrance of the Ecclesiastical Year, for Advent begins with the Sunday nearest the feast of St. Andrew. Not only is Andrew the first born of the Apostles, but he led the other Apostles to Christ, and as a special lover of the Cross, he tells us that the Cross is the key of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the foundation of the Ecclesiastical Year. This feast admonishes us, as it were, to begin the year with a love for the Cross, and to make the resolution of practicing self-denial.

(2.) The feast of the Immaculate Conception. This feast was celebrated by the churches of the East, even in the fifth century, and by the churches of the West since the seventh century. Pope Pius IX. in the year 1854 proclaimed, to the joy of the whole Catholic world, the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin to be a dogma of the Church. Since then this feast has been more zealously kept. With the conception of Mary, the Morning Star of the Redemption arose. On this beautiful feast the Christian should pray God to enlighten him, that he may know the faults of the past year, and learn from Mary, by purity of heart, to prepare for the coming of Christ.

(3.) Feast of St. Thomas, Apostle, Dec. 21.

FOR OR AGAINST ?



SAMOSATA was a splendid city on the River Euphrates. The Euphrates is twin river to the Tigris, and both flow through the land of the ancient Chaldees. Maximian was Emperor over this part of the Eastern world, and about the year A.D. 297 he returned victorious from his campaign with the Persians. Flushed with victory, he proclaimed a festival in honour of Fortune, a Roman goddess. Her temple was to be rebuilt, he said, and games instituted to do her honour. All the people and magistrates of the city were to celebrate her mysteries in the temple.

When the day came there was endless rejoicing; the whole city reeked with the smell of burnt victims and the incense offered to the goddess, who could neither see, nor hear, nor help. In one of the finest mansions of the rich city, up in a secret chamber, were two venerable men. They were kneeling in prayer, their faces turned to the eastern wall, upon which there was painted an image of the Cross. Seven times a day they left their occupations and prostrated themselves before the sign of their redemption. This day they were not long together before five others joined them, young men and noble friends who loved the old magistrates as fathers. Shall I tell you their names? They are rather hard for our English tongue, and they sound very Eastern Paragrus, James, Habibus, Romanus, and Lollianus. These Princes were not Christians, and they looked with amazement at the two, Hipparchus and Philotheus. What could they be doing with serious faces on such a glorious day as this? Why were they gloomily alone when all beside them were out in the glorious sunshine rejoicing? Hipparchus answered that they were adoring their God, the Maker of Heaven and earth. One of the boys pointed with his finger at the lifeless picture on the wall, and asked them if that were their God. They listened attentively as the saintly old men explained the Faith; and when they had finished the five visitors asked to be made Christians. The old men explained that death, and a cruel death, was all they could look for in this world as followers of the Crucified; had they not better test their strength a while and defer their baptism? But the valiant five put their trust in God, and begged for the saving water. That day a private messenger was sent to the priest James. The letter was sealed with the judicial seal, and it read as follows:

“Be pleased to come as soon as possible, and bring with you a vessel of water and a Host and a horn of oil for anointing. Your presence is earnestly required by certain tender sheep which are come over to our fold and are impatient that our mark be set upon them.” You see how cleverly the letter is worded. If it fell into the hands of spies they would not understand it, and the messenger would not get into trouble.

As soon as James received the letter he set out on foot to the beautiful mansion in the stately part of the city. He knew the seal well, and knew who had sent it. He covered the sacred vessels with his ragged cloak and hurried on his way. As he entered the house he said: “Peace be with you, servants of Jesus Christ, Who was crucified for His creatures.” Then the five young men begged on their knees for baptism. They explained how they were ready to give up all for their Faith, that they knew how bitter would be their death, but that Our Lord and Saviour would help them in the struggle. After they had all prayed

together for the space of an hour they made their submission to the Church, were baptized, and received Holy Communion.

When the sacred rite was over, the priest took up the holy vessels again, hid them under his garment, and hurried through the streets home.

Meanwhile the festival was going on in the town; there were blowing of trumpets, slaughtering of victims, burning of incense, and riotous games. On the third day the Emperor happened to ask if all the magistrates had adored in the temple. Instantly an informer declared that the two chief officers, Hipparchus and Philotheus, had not taken part in the sacrifices for three years. Immediately an order was sent to the two friends to present themselves at the Temple of Fortune and offer incense to the idol. The seven confessors were together, but the messenger only sought the two judges. Hipparchus immediately received fifty stripes for answering the Emperor contemptuously about his gods. Philotheus was promised still higher offices in the court if he would offer incense, but he remained staunch and true. Both were manacled and sent to prison. After them came their five young friends. The Emperor tried persuasion and flattery; but the boys only smiled and stood firm.

They were chained in separate dungeons, and kept without food till the festival was over. You may imagine how those seven holy martyrs would pray for strength. They knew so well how dreadfully the Christians were persecuted, how slow was their torture, how malicious their executioners; and they would ask Our Lord to help them. What they most relied upon was the Holy Communion they had received. They told the Emperor that they could not dishonor their own bodies, because they had been nourished by the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

The Emperor had rich tents spread out upon the meadows that lay on the river's bank. Maximian's seat was high, and overlooked the spot where the sparkling River Euphrates flowed to meet the Tigris. The trumpets blew, the crowd cheered as the Monarch in his imperial robes seated himself. Then came a sad procession: the two old magistrates were brought from prison with chains on their hands and feet; the other five followed with their hands tied behind their backs. They were asked the usual question, Would they sacrifice? and they answered, "No" They were racked and scourged. Then they were sent back, all bleeding and torn; they were to see no one, and no comfort or relief was to be given to them. Their food was to be coarse bread, just enough to keep them alive. They lay in prison all by themselves, with no one to dress their wounds, with no one to say a kind word, for more than two months. Every day they expected to be taken before their judge, and to be either tortured again or put to death.

Just suppose these seven holy men had not learnt to pray or to make sacrifices, would they have been able to bear that trial, do you think? I am sure they would not. Someday, when they felt very weak and discouraged, they would have stopped the jailer and told him that they had reconsidered the matter, and were ready to do the imperial will. Then they would have been taken out of prison with all honour; the Emperor would have said some gracious words to them, and they would have been restored to their property. But then! They would have bought time by the loss of eternity, and that is a mighty poor bargain, and not worth considering for one moment.

And the two valiant confessors did not hesitate one moment. When the beautiful June sun was making the waters of the Euphrates gleam like gold, the seven men were brought

before the Emperor. They were reduced to skeletons; they could scarcely walk; they were more like dead than living men. Maximian looked compassionately at them. He told them that if they would give in he would have them taken to a warm bath, their hair should be shorn, and their wounds healed. They begged he would not try to rob them of their crown. Then his anger broke into a fury. "Wretches !" he screamed. "You seek death and you shall find it !" He commanded cords to be tied round their mouths and bound round them, so that they should not be able to speak. A procession was formed, and they were conducted to the place of execution. Then was shown how much these good masters were loved. Their friends and servants came, and made a sort of escort, bewailing them and openly showing their displeasure at their execution. Some of the most powerful of the citizens got leave to make one more attempt to win them over. They untied their cords, took them into a sheltered spot, and implored of them to pretend to adore.

But the seven holy men raised up their voices to praise God and bless Him for all His benefits. At the place of execution the Emperor was present to see them die. Seven crosses were set up over against the gate of the city. The martyrs were hoisted up and left to their fate. Some Christian ladies came, and, by bribery, were allowed to wipe their agonized faces. Hipparchus expired after a short struggle; two died the next day, and the rest were taken down alive and cruelly tortured.

Now, children, such a story makes our blood run cold. We shrink from pain, from discomfort even. How should we endure such-like suffering ? All we can say is that we have not to bear it yet. And if Our Lord sent us the pain, He would send us the grace to bear it. In the meantime we have to bear our little troubles and little griefs with great patience and for the love of God. Nothing helps so much to do big things as doing little ones as well as ever we can; not only pretty well, but as well as ever we can. We'll remember that, won't we ?

Source: Saints and Festivals, Imprimatur 1913

The Legend of the Christmas Tree

We trace the origin of the Christmas tree back to the year 724. Winfrid, Apostle of the Germans, had returned to that country from Rome, where he had been named “Boniface” by Pope Gregory II on account of the good work he had accomplished among the Germans. All are familiar with the story of how St. Boniface chopped down the giant oak sacred to the pagan god Thor, and saved the eldest son of the chieftain Gundhar from being sacrificed to the god. All the assembled tribes were struck with awe at the deed of the Christian priest, which showed the pagan deity to be powerless. “Tell us then,” spake Gundhar, “what is the word that thou bringest to us from the Almighty?” “This is the word, and this is the counsel,” answered Boniface. “Not a drop of blood shall fall tonight, for this is the Birth-night of the white Christ, Son of the All-Father, and Saviour of the world.” Then pointing to the pine tree behind him he continued, “This little tree, a young child of the forest, shall be your holy tree tonight. It is the wood of peace, for your houses are built of fir. It is a sign of endless life, for its branches are ever green. See how it points towards heaven! Let this be called the tree of the Christ-Child; gather about it, not in the wild woods but in your homes; there it will shelter no deeds of blood, but loving gifts and rites of kindness.” In joyous procession they carried the fir to Gundhar’s house. There in the great hall they set it up and the sweet odor of balsam filled the spacious room. This was the first Christmas tree.

Source: A Christmas Chronicle – Imprimatur: Thomas H. McLaughlin



God is calling, calling, morn and noon,
 All the night is ringing with His cry;
 “Go forth,” He says, “from sin and pleasure, soon
 Shall come the day when thou shalt surely die.

“Choose here the little pain that shortly ceases
 When death shall lead thy weary feet away;
 For know the joy of future increases
 Unto the shining of a perfect day.”

~ Charles L. O'Donnell, C.S.C.

Can you find your way to the star from the base of the Christmas Tree?



THE INFANT APPEARS TO SAINT CATHERINE OF BOLOGNA

On Christmas about the year 1440, while St. Catherine Bologna was in the convent of the Poor Clares in Ferrara, Italy, she was favored by a vision of Our Blessed Mother and the Infant Jesus. From her own words we learn that she asked permission from her Superior to spend the whole of Christmas Night in the monastery chapel. It was her intention to recite a thousand Ave Maria's in honor of the Blessed Mother. At midnight, the hour when it is believed Our Saviour was born, she beheld Our Blessed Lady appear holding in her arms the Infant Jesus, the Babe being swathed in linen bands as new-born infants commonly were. The Blessed Mother bent forward and placed the Infant in the arms of St. Catherine. This Saint later founded the convent of the poor Clares in Bologna, where she died in the year 1468.

SAINT FELIX OF CANTALICE AND THE INFANT JESUS

The Capuchin Friar St. Felix of Cantalice spent forty years of his life going through the streets of Rome begging alms for his convent. That Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament might not be neglected, he spent many a night in the community chapel, remaining there in prayer and meditation until the bell for Matins called the other Friars to morning devotions. So it was nothing out of the ordinary that on one Christmas Eve; about the year 1580, he was watching alone through the night in the chapel before the Crib. On this night the Blessed Mother appeared to him; in her arms was the Divine Child, Whom Our Lady placed in the arms of the saint.

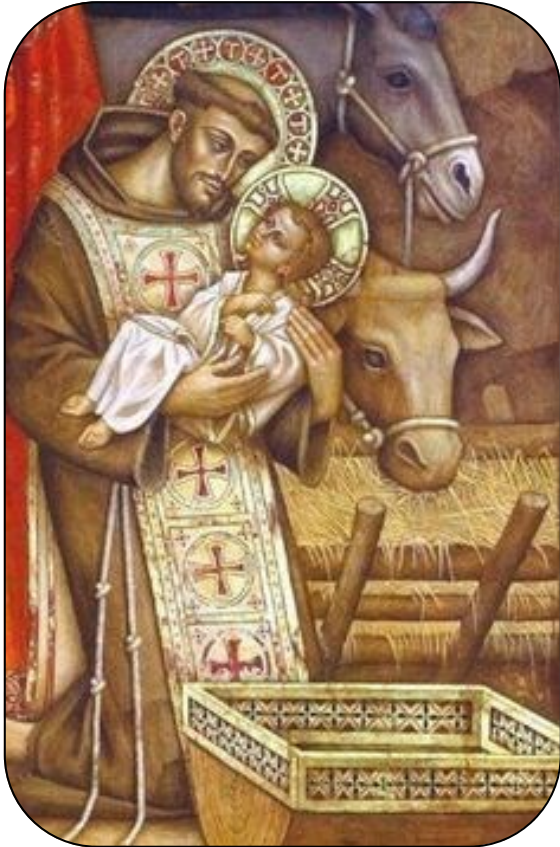
Source: A Christmas Chronicle – Imprimatur; Thomas H. McLaughlin



QUIZ ON THE FEASTS AND FASTS OF THE CHURCH

1. What is a festival of the Church?
2. What is the octave of a feast?
3. Distinguish between fixed and movable feasts.
4. What does the Church commemorate on March 25?
5. What are the formal names for the following feast days: (1) New Year's, (2) Candlemas Day, (3) Whitsunday?
6. Are holydays of obligation the same in every country?
7. What is the vigil of a feast?
8. What feast do we celebrate on the first of January?
9. What event is commemorated in the Mass of the Holy Innocents, December 28th?
10. What is old Christmas Day?

*Source: A Catholic Quiz Book, Imprimatur 1945
Answers can be found on the last page of the Gazette*



THE FIRST CRIB

We read that the mother of St. Francis of Assisi, in order to imitate the Mother of God, wished that her first son should be born in a stable. And so it came about, for the child could not be born until the mother left the beautiful bedroom, went into the stable, and there lay upon the straw in one of the stalls. Thus the first cradle of Francis, like that of the Saviour, was a manger full of straw in a stable. He began his life in the year 1182, among tame animals in Assisi, one of the oldest cities of Italy.

Later St. Francis founded the Franciscan Order. He had so much devotion for the mystery of the birth of Christ, that he rose daily at midnight, in order to adore our Lord at the hour when He was born into the world. Later he even went so far as to ask from Pope Honorius III permission to have midnight Mass sung on Christmas night. Out of love for the divine Infant, the Pope granted the permission.

Midnight Mass was sung on Christmas night in the middle of a forest which was near the Monastery of Creccio. The clergy and people of Greccio were invited by St. Francis to keep Christ's Nativity with him. He arranged with his monks a sort of stable or cave with rocks, moss, and branches of trees then they put up a manger. They scattered straw over the floor of the stable, and brought there two animals. It was in this simple stable that an altar was erected and midnight Mass sung.

A large crowd of people came to the midnight Mass. They carried torches and all night long they made the forest resound with their pious hymns and prayers. The story is told that some saw a little child asleep in the manger, who woke up when St. Francis took him in his arms.

Application: Christ was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Christmas Day, in Bethlehem, more than nineteen hundred years ago. In memory of this greatest event in the history of the world, Holy Mother Church celebrates Christmas in a very solemn manner. The priests may say three Masses on the birthday of Jesus. The custom of having a crib in our houses and midnight Mass dates back to the time of St. Francis.



ANOTHER CHRISTMAS SAINT

St. Joseph of Cupertino was born in Cupertino, Italy, in 1603. After several attempts to join a religious order, he was finally accepted by the Conventual Franciscans at Grotella in 1621. He was ordained priest in 1628. From this time on, St. Joseph's life was one long succession of ecstasies, miracles of healing and supernatural happenings to an extent hardly paralleled in the authenticated life of any other saint. On Christmas Eve about the year 1630, while he was still stationed at Grotella, as the simple peasants of the vicinity were singing Christmas hymns in the church, the Saint rose in the air with a great cry and flew on to the high altar where he remained on his knees before the Blessed Sacrament for fully a quarter of an hour. Though the altar was festally decorated with many flickering candles, not a single flame disturbed the Saint or even scorched his habit. At the command of his Superior he at once floated back to his place in the choir.

The last six years of his life were spent in the convent at Osimo. There on one occasion his fellow religious saw him fly up seven or eight feet in the air to kiss the statue of the Infant Jesus which stood over the altar. He carried this wax image with him in his arms and floated about with it to his cell. Every Christmas Eve at Osimo, St. Joseph built a pretty little crib. When it was completed, he would with a charming Christmas hymn invite his confreres to visit it. Then taking his station before the image of the Diving Infant in the Crib, contemplating the events of the Incarnation and the Birth of the Son of God, he would each time, under the very eyes of his associates, go into ecstasy.

Taken from: A Christmas Chronicle; Imprimatur – Thomas H. McLaughlin



“Gloomy night embraced the place
 Where the noble Infant lay.
 The Babe looked up and showed His face;
 In spite of darkness, it was day.
 It was the day, sweet did rise
 Not from the East but from Thine eyes.”

~Richard Crashaw

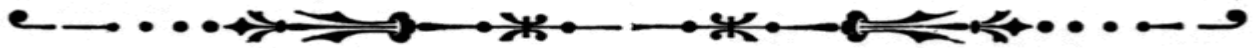




CHRISTMAS WORD SEARCH

I	Y	O	O	V	G	W	P	E	G	L	F	U	S	M
Y	V	J	Q	W	W	C	I	G	B	R	T	J	A	U
H	J	P	A	D	S	M	R	S	A	Y	B	Y	M	Y
M	W	O	D	T	S	D	O	N	E	V	T	D	T	B
D	T	P	A	O	D	D	K	S	F	M	B	B	S	K
L	G	B	U	I	M	I	R	H	T	E	E	H	I	I
M	L	F	I	H	N	H	S	E	P	A	T	N	R	N
E	F	Z	N	C	K	H	M	B	H	E	R	U	H	F
M	E	H	E	L	H	T	E	B	R	P	S	E	C	A
U	O	N	M	E	S	S	I	A	H	S	E	O	K	N
L	S	X	L	M	C	D	Z	O	U	L	C	H	J	T
E	I	G	A	M	L	A	L	S	O	E	R	U	S	T
M	Y	R	R	H	N	I	E	O	R	G	I	H	P	U
R	Y	P	J	S	L	J	A	B	G	N	B	A	Q	G
R	F	E	Y	E	K	N	O	D	R	A	J	K	Y	P

1. ANGELS
2. BETHLEHEM
3. CHRISTMAS
4. CRIB
5. DONKEY
6. FRANKINCENSE
7. GOLD
8. INFANT
9. JESUS
10. JOSEPH
11. MAGI
12. MARY
13. MESSIAH
14. MYRRH
15. NAZARETH
16. SHEPHERDS
17. STABLE
18. STAR
19. WISEMEN



What lovely Infant can this be,
 That in the little crib I see?
 So sweetly on the straw it lies
 It must have come from Paradise.

What makes the crib so bright and clear?
 What voices sing so sweetly here?
 Ah! see behind the window pane,
 The little- angels looking in!

Hail, holy cave, though dark thou be,
 The world is lighted up from thee.
 Hail Holy Babe!—creation stands
 And moves upon thy little hands.

Source: Catholic Hymns, 1860



JESUS IS BORN IN BETHLEHEM

Joseph sent the hammer down with strong, even strokes. The nail was going through the wood slowly. It was hardwood-oak, the best kind for plowshares. When he had driven in the nail, he laid down the hammer and leaned with all his weight on the finished plow. It was sturdy and well built; it would cut a clean furrow-old Eli would be pleased. He ran his finger along the handles. He sanded the smooth- they would not hurt old Eli's hands.

He stood the plow up in the corner and started to put away his tools. It was early winter and the days were growing short. It was too late now to begin something else. Besides, he was glad, these days, to go home a little early. Mary would be waiting, sitting in the half-light with supper set out on the table. She would have laid aside her sewing because of the growing darkness, but when he came, she would rise and light the lamp and bring him the little basin to purify his hands. Together they would stand to say the blessing that every Jewish man says before he eats: Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who bringeth forth bread from the earth...

"I finished old Eli's plow," he would tell her. He knew what she would answer. "I'll bake a loaf of bread for him tomorrow." Old Eli was poor and almost blind.

"You wait and see if he doesn't bring us a measure of barley when harvest comes," Joseph had said to Mary. Old Eli was like that- hating to receive without giving something in return.

Little did Joseph know that he and Mary would be many miles away when harvest came...

With his tools put away, he picked up a broom and started to sweep the shavings from the floor of his shop. "You could eat off the floor in the shop of Joseph the carpenter." The neighbors used to say sometimes laughing. But it was one way to praise God- to do your work carefully.

Joseph was thinking of Jesus as he swept- Jesus who was now very soon to be born. All of his work now was for Jesus. He had made the house tight and warm for winter. He had carved a little cradle. Mary must have everything he could get for her ... all fall he had worked and planned. Ah, Mary! How he loved the sound of her name! And to think God had given her to him, to guard and protect! Mary who was to be the mother of Jesus!

It was shortly before their marriage that the angel had come to him to tell him the secret about Mary. He had come to him in his sleep. "Do not be afraid, Joseph Son of David," the angel had said, "to take Mary for thy wife, for that which is begotten of her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins..."

Joseph had wakened trembling. Thou shalt call his name Jesus. ... He shall save the people from their sins.... Those were the things one said of the Messiah! He was afraid with a holy fear. He had risen from his bed, fearful and shaking, and had knelt there a long time. "Yes, Lord," he had said, not hearing the soft, night noises. "Make me worthy, Lord..." The tears ran down his cheeks. That was months ago. He was still praying the same prayer... "Make me worthy, Lord." Now, as he was sweeping, he was thinking of the words of the prophet Isaias:

Behold a virgin shall conceive
And bear a Son
And his name shall be Emmanuel...

Yet there was something strange about the prophecy, for it also said:

And thou, Bethlehem,
Out of thee shall come forth he
That is to be the Ruler of Israel....

Why did it not say Nazareth instead of Bethlehem? Yet if sometimes he secretly wondered, and Mary too, they never spoke about it. Who were they to question the words of the Holy Book? The prophets often spoke in hidden ways.

And thou, Bethlehem
Out of thee shall come forth he....

It was strange how those words haunted him tonight. He hung his work apron on a nail, cover over the fire for the night, wrapped his cloak about him, and opened the door of his shop. A gust of wind blew a swirl of dust into his eyes. But behind the sound of the wind, he could hear a confused murmur of many voices coming from the direction of the market place. He did not need to pass through the market on his way home- he thought: Perhaps I should go and see what the noise is about. Nazareth was usually quiet at dusk on a winter day...

“Ah, neighbor Joseph, have you heard the news?”

“What news,” Joseph asked quietly, trying to keep from being jostled.

“There was an edict from Caesar. There’s to be a census. We are all to be enrolled. ‘Each in his own city,’ the edict said. Ah, but it’s a hard thing to be traveling all about the country in the dead of winter – and the roads so bad, too.”

“Yes, it will be hard for many,” Joseph answered gently.

“What’s your city, neighbor?” Aren’t you of the City of David?”

Joseph nodded. Yes, he was of the City of David. Both he and Mary were descended from the shepherd-king And the City of David was – Bethlehem.

Joseph shivered a little, as another gust of wind whipped open his cloak; but he smiled to himself ever so slightly.

“What are you smiling about, Joseph? It’s no smiling matter, in the dead of winter, and my Sara with the cold ague upon her and me with a sore on my leg. What are you smiling about, Joseph?”

“Ah, I know, it is hard,” Joseph repeated, but he was thinking:

And thou, Bethlehem
Out of thee shall come forth he
That is to be the Ruler of Israel...

Mary sat with her sewing in her lap, waiting for Joseph to come. Joseph is late tonight, she thought. It was well she had left the broth on the stove, instead of dishing it up. It would have been quite cold by now. She sat very still, watching the shadows move across the wall, but her mind was elsewhere. Will it be this week or next? She thought. The kinswoman who was going to be with her when Jesus was born, as Mary had been with

Elizabeth, had come to see her today .”I am ready,” she had said, “when you need me. Send Joseph, and I will come.” Now Mary, sitting in the growing dusk, was remembering the words of the angel:

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High...
And of his kingdom there shall be no end...

Just then she heard a familiar quick step on the path – Joseph was coming. She got up and lit the lamp and started toward the door to greet him. He opened it softly and came toward her. “Mary,; he said, and then he was silent. He was thinking what it would mean to her – what it would mean to them both – to start out then for the long journey south to Bethlehem. In the corner, waiting and ready, stood the little crib he had made. Nearby, in a small wooden chest, were the tiny swaddling bands, the soft wool coverlets. Everything was ready for Jesus. Now there was no knowing what small, crowded village inn would be his birthplace.

“Mary, can you bear hard news?”

She listened quietly. Then suddenly, her face lighted with a strange look of wonder. He guessed the thought that was passing in her mind.

And thou, Bethlehem
Out of thee shall come forth he
That is to be the Ruler of Israel...

+ + +

Two days later Mary and Joseph started down through the town to join a caravan going south. Mary was on the donkey which had carried her that spring to Ain-Karim. In her saddlebags were the tiny swaddling bands. The white wool coverlets; but the cradle stood in the empty house. Joseph walked beside her on foot.

“Ah, neighbor Joseph, you wasted no time in getting started. I see your Mary is with you. My Sara is staying behind.”

“God be with you, neighbor. Your are ready early.”

They were a friendly group, these Nazarenes, and Joseph returned their friendliness. But he was glad for the moments of silence that came as they would their way around mud-holes in the storm washed road. He kept watching Mary anxiously, for the road was hard and rough in winter. After the first half day, her face looked white and drawn, but she made no murmur. She smiled at him with her shy, knowing smile...

And thou Bethlehem
Out of thee...

It was their secret. The tiredness did not matter.

They rode across the plains of Esdraelon – but now they were bleak and cold; and then they crossed the country of Samaria; and then, on the third day, they entered Judea. But the olive trees were bare and the hillsides were gaunt and brown. It was well along in the fourth day that they drew near the holy city of Jerusalem, where the rest of the caravan was going.

“Shall we stay tonight in Jerusalem?” Joseph asked.

“No, let us go on,” Mary said. Her face was white, but she smiled as she said it. It would be good to be a their journey’s end. And so, they skirted the city on the west without entering the gates, and headed south the four miles to Bethlehem. They went along in silence, busy with their thoughts. A little while before Mary had said, “I think it will be tonight, Joseph. I think Jesus will be coming tonight.” Her voice was full of joy.

“Is there a good inn at Bethlehem?” Joseph asked a traveler as they paused to rest by Rachel’s tomb.

“Yes, sir, yes. It’s at the crossroads, just as you come into town. God be with you, sir.”

They were nearly there by now, and the air was frosty and cold as they would their way along the narrow ridge of Judean hills. Far below them, on the plains of Moab, the rich read earth was turning dark with nightfall. Above them the first faint stars were showing in the sky. Shepherds had gathered their sheep together for the night and were lighting fires on the hillsides. Some were already seated, watching the sparks fly upward, laughing and talking and playing on their pipes.

Tu-la-la-ru

Tu-la-ru-la-la-ru...

It was a wistful, haunting little sound. Mary and Joseph smiled as they listened. Shepherds were kindly people; they loved their sheep. David had been a shepherd before he had been a king. Hundreds of year before he had said in one of his songs that God was like a shepherd – it was a nice thought.

Tu-la-la-ru-la-ru ...

Joseph’s feet were cut with stones and brambles, and Mary was so tired that she ached in every bone. But they did not speak of these things. Bethlehem was just ahead. They had caught glimpses of it now and then, with its white roofs and its twinkling lights, as the road wound back and forth around the edges of the hills. It was with great relief that why rounded the last bend and came into the outskirts of the town. They quickened their pace a little – the inn could not be far away. But the town was no the quiet little place it was in normal times. There were shouts, and the noise of donkeys moving about in courtyards, and the high-pitched jingle of camel bells. There were many, it seemed, who had come to the City of David to be enrolled.

When they turned in at the inn yard, they could see already that the inn was crowded. Donkeys were jostling one another; camel drivers were shouting and scolding; boys were hurrying about with bags of feed and water for the drinking trough. Inside, there was noisy laughter. They were not surprised when the innkeeper thrust out his head in answer to their know. “No room in the inn. You’ll have to go somewhere else.” They were not surprised, but they were very tired, and they shrank from the uproar and bustle of the town.

Joseph helped Mary gently back onto her donkey, and they started on heir fruitless search, knocking at doors, speaking to people on street corner.

“Could you tell us where we might find a night’s lodging? The inn is full.”

“Sorry, sir – we’ve no room here. You might try in the next street – the third house – they sometimes take travelers.”

“Please, we were told at this house you might have room for us to spend the night.”

“Sorry, we just took in guests.”

It was quite dark now, and Mary was shivering with the cold.

“Here take my cloak ,” Joseph said, but she would not hear of it. They paused a moment to consider. Where could they try next?

Suddenly, Mary felt a slight pull on her sleeve.

“Lady,” a boy’s voice said, “I know a place.”

She looked down into the serious, upturned face of a ragged boy.

“You do son?”

“Yes, Lady, it’s not a very nice place, but I heard you talking. It’s the only place, lady, and there’s straw to lie on. Every else is full.”

She turned to Joseph, and he nodded.

“All right, son,” Joseph said. “You lead the way.”

And so they set out together in the winter night – the ragged boy and the man and woman from the north. “She looks very tired,” thought the boy, “and yet she isn’t cross – and she has the loveliest smile. And the man is kind and gentle.”

He led them along a rocky path that followed the edge of the hill. The wind stung their faces, and it was hard to see where they ere going, once they had left the town. But it was really not very far. They had hardly gone a quarter of an hour whey the boy stopped and cried, “Their it is,” and he pointed to a cave cut into the side of the hill. He led them to it and pushed open the rough wooden door. “See, it is quite large – and it has nice straw in it.” He looked up at them anxiously. “Will it be alright?” It was low and dark and damp, with a rough manger at the back, but it was quite clean for a stable.

“Of course it’s all right,” Joseph said, and Mary, tired as she was, nodded and smiled. The boy stood there a moment, eyeing her wistfully. She was such a young, lovely lady! “God be with you,” he said shyly, and darted out into the night.

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On one of the steep ridges above Bethlehem, shepherds were sleeping around the fire. Only one was awake – a tall young lad in a rough shepherd’s tunic.. It was his turn to watch, and he sat by the fire, trying to keep awake. He amused himself by counting the sparks, and then he shifted his position and looked up at the stars. They made him think of a line from a song of the shepherds kind David;

The heavens show forth the glory of God
And the firmament declareth the work of his hands...

He fingered his pipe as he sat there, wishing he could play a tune. But of course he couldn’t – it would wake the others.

Just beyond the circle of light, the sheep were sleeping. They were his charge for the

night and they must come to no harm. He scrambled to his feet and tiptoed over to count them – they were all there. He tiptoed back and stood a minute, scanning the dark hills for signs of danger before settling down again. Suddenly a light attracted him over to one side, and he gave a quick little cry.

Instantly the other sprang up. “What it is, lad? Is it a wolf?”

“Look!” cried the boy. “Look over there!” and he pointed. But where before he had seen only a light, now there was the figure of a man, all shining and radiant, standing in the midst of the brightness. With one impulse, they fell upon their faces. They were shaking with fear.

The figure came closer. “Fear not,” he said, and his voice was kind and comforting. Still trembling, they looked at him, their eyes growing used to the brightness. Could an angel be an angel on their cold, rocky hillside? Could an angel be speaking to them? Down in the market place, people stepped aside to avoid them, and they sat in the very last seats in the Synagogue on the Sabbath, because of their ragged clothes. Surely, an angel would not be coming to them. There must be some mistake.

But there was no mistake. An angel from heaven had a message for them from the Most High God! They were simple enough to listen. It would be no use to go telling the Scribes and Pharisees in Jerusalem that the Son of God was born that night in a stable. It would be no use to tell Herod or Ceaser. Yes, it was to shepherds God had sent his messenger. When they were calm enough to listen, he began:

“Fear not, for behold I bring you tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Savior who is Christ the Lord, in the City of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You will find the Infant wrapped in swaddling – clothes, and laid in a manger.”

The shepherds listened on their knees, their poor hearts beating wildly. The angel had hardly finished speaking when they heard all around them the most wonderful singing – hundreds and hundreds of voices of angelic sweetness, all singing together

“Glory to God in the highest
And peace on earth
To men of good will”

Gradually the voices grew fainter, the brightness faded. A shivering little band of shepherds knelt trembling in the darkness, alone once more on their hillside.

At first they were too dazed to move or speak.. They knelt on, staring into the darkness, with the words of the angel echoing in their ears:

And this shall be a sign unto you. You will find the Infant wrapped in swaddling – clothes and laid in a manger...

Good tidings of great joy...
A Savior who is Christ the Lord...

Suddenly the full truth dawned on them: It was the Messiah – at last he had come! They might be poor, stupid shepherds, but they too had heard of the prophecies, sitting in the last seats in the Synagogue: He was called Wonderful, Counselor, God the Mighty, Prince of Peace...

“Brothers,” said one of the shepherds softly, when at last they were able to speak, “we must go and find the Child. We must look for the Baby in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

“I’ll take Him my sheepskin,” said one.

“And this loaf of bread,” announced another.

“And I this copper coin,” said a third.

“And I my pipe,” thought the shepherd boy who had been the first one to see the angel. But he was too shy to speak. He fingered it under his cloak – it was the dearest thing he had.

And so they started won the rocky trail. When they had reached the main road they paused bewildered. Was no one else going to seek the Child? There was not a soul abroad. Surely the angle would have told them, down in the town. Why was not the road full of people, going to find the little King.

They hesitated, wondering which way to go. A baby lying in a manger! There were many mangers in Bethlehem. At least half the houses in town would have courtyards with a manger in them! As they stood there puzzled, one of them cried out, “Brothers, look over there! They looked where he pointed. They spied, very low in the sky, almost touching the ridge opposite, the brightest star they had ever seen. They rubbed their eyes and looked again. It was brighter then ever, and it seemed almost to be beckoning them. Without thinking, they started walking toward it, scrambling up the steep rocky ridge.

Suddenly, one of them call out: “The cave – its leading us to the cave!”

They knew that cave well – and in it they knew that there was a manger. They hurried now eagerly , stumbling over rocks and brambles...

They were breathless when they reached the top of the slope. They were almost at the entrance of the cave – and the star was standing sill now – very , very bright – directly over their heads.

They waited outside a moment to catch their breath. They straightened their poor, ragged clothes and shook the dust from their sandals. Then, taking their gifts in their hands, they stooped one by one and entered.

Inside they saw – a man, a lady, a donkey, and, yes, a Baby, lying on straw in the manger. Everything was just as the angle had said – simple, and plain, and beautiful. Suddenly they began to tremble. Tears rushed into their eyes and down their wind-burned cheeks. It is strange, they thought, to be crying about a Baby!

They stood there for a moment, unnoticed. Presently, the lady looked up and gave a little start of surprise. “Joseph,” she said and the man got up and came toward them. His eyes were wet, but he was smiling

“May the dear God be praised,” said the oldest shepherd, and he bowed deeply and laid down his sheepskin. “It’s not very much, but it will keep him warm.”

“The blessing of the Lord be one him,” said another, setting down his loaf of bread. Last of all came the shepherd boy with his pipe, but he was to shy to say anything at all. The child slept on, untroubled, wrapped in swaddling clothes, the little Savoir who was Christ the Lord.

“Look,” the Lady said, going over and lifting the tiny coverlet. She pulled out a small, curled hand. It opened and closed about her finger, and dark eyes opened for a moment; then they closed again. “His name is Jesus,” she said very softly.

The shepherds came forward shyly. “Ah, Lady, may we touch him? May we touch the little Jesus?”

She nodded, and they stroked his soft cheeks with their big, roughened hands. They kissed his tiny hand, his swaddling bands, his little coverlet; then they stood shyly, feasting their eyes.

Finally one of them said, “Brothers, let us go. We must tell the people of Bethlehem that they too may adore Him.” They bowed, one after another, and tiptoed out. The first light of dawn was in the east, but the bright star was still there, shining above the doorway to the cave.

Glory to God in the Highest

And on earth, peace

To men of Good Will.

They would never forget this night as long as they lived.

It was still early when they reached the market place. Most of the townspeople were snoring in their beds, but a few energetic vendors, were already at their stalls, laying out their wares.

“Have you seen the little King?” called out one of the shepherds. “The little king?” echoed the vendor. He had a cross, dark face.

“Yes, the little King, the Saviour God has promised. Didn’t the angel bring you the good news?”

A small crowd gathered quickly, in spite of the early hour. Some looked interested, but others started jeering: “What kind of wine were you drinking on your hillside to be talking about seeing a king!”

Sadly the shepherds shook their heads. Would nobody believe them?

“We drank no wine. We were asleep until the angels came and woke us.”

But the crowd would not listen to them. “Be gone, fellows. We have no time for shepherd’s tales.”

And so the shepherds gathered their cloaks around them and made their way out of the town. They went back silently to their hillside, their sheep. Their wives would believe them, their children, their children’s children. Years hence they would still be telling, around their watch fire, the story of the angels and the cave, of the Infant in swaddling clothes laid in a manger – the tidings of great joy.

Source: Jesus, Son of David, Imprimatur 1953

Answers to Quiz on Fasts and Feasts

1. Festivals (or feasts) are certain days of the year which the Church wishes us to keep holy in a special manner.
2. On this day (the feast of the Annunciation) the Church celebrates the mission of the Archangel Gabriel, who announced to the Blessed Virgin that she was to be the Mother of God.
3. Fixed or immovable feasts are those celebrated on the same date each year (like Christmas); movable feasts are those whose dates vary from year to year (like Easter).
4. The Octave of a feast is composed of the eight days which follow the feast.
5. No, they differ somewhat from country to country.
6. (1) Feast of the Circumcision, (2) feast of the Purification, (3) Pentecost Sunday.
7. The day before a feast, set aside for preparation, watching, prayer and generally fasting.
8. The Circumcision of Our Lord.
9. The slaughter of the little children at Bethlehem at the order of Herod, who sought to destroy the Infant Jesus.
10. January 6th or the feast of the Epiphany. In the early centuries, under the Julian calendar, the birth of Our Lord was celebrated on this day, by some Christians.

This is a series of *Catholic Gazettes* for children. We are trying to put a little information in each gazette for all ages. We pray that it will help all to know and love their Faith better. It is put together by the students of St. Catherine's Academy as part of their Language, Religion, Art and Typing Courses. A.M.D.G. We hope you enjoy it. If you have any suggestions, ideas or comments please let us know at : <jwillson61@charter.net>

God Bless all of you!

Tim, the father of this clan, Timmy, Mary, Sarah, Katie, Patrick, Elizabeth and the teacher, Julie. God is good!!

~ ALL ARTICLES ARE MEANT TO BE IN KEEPING WITH THE SOUND TEACHINGS OF THE HOLY ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, WHICH IS THE SAME CHURCH FOUNDED BY OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST AND WILL LAST UNTIL THE END OF TIME.~