

The Catholic Company presents



What does Jesus' birthplace look like?

We often imagine Jesus' birthplace as a wooden stable, but most scholars believe the structure was actually a stone cave or grotto. You can actually visit this holy site! Learn more here.

Did you know that you can visit the place where Jesus was born?

The Grotto of the Nativity is a cave that is commonly held to be the site of Jesus' birth. Many early Christians and scholars, including St. Justin Martyr and Origen of Alexandria, affirm this belief.

Christians have traveled to the Grotto of the Nativity since the early days of the Church, when Christianity was still illegal in the Roman Empire. In an attempt to prevent Christians from visiting the site, Roman guards built a pagan shrine over the cave.

After Constantine's conversion in the early fourth century, however, the shrine was replaced with a Catholic basilica, known today as the Church of the Nativity. The original basilica burned down in 529. Emperor Justinian later rebuilt the structure, which survived the invasions of the Persians in the early 600s.

To reach the Grotto of the Nativity, you must enter the Church of the Nativity and walk downstairs to the grotto. The exact spot where Jesus was born is marked by a silver, fourteen-pointed star. This star has an inscription that says *Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est*, which means "Here Jesus Christ was born to the Virgin Mary."

On feast days, the cave is lit with forty-eight hanging lamps. The rock wall of the cave is decorated with silver and kissed by thousands of visitors each year.

To learn more about fascinating places that showcase our beautiful Christian history, [check out Mike Aquilina's *A History of the Church in 100 Objects*, sold here.](#)