

# Nativity of the Lord • December 25, 2020

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Sacred Heart Parish, Sacramento

## Merry Christmas

In two of the Gospel readings for Christmas Day, the shepherds figure prominently. Why? Nothing is said to indicate they were outstanding good people or that they were leaders in the Bethlehem community.

St. Thomas Aquinas wondered whether it was fitting that these shepherds got the announcement of Jesus' birth first. He concluded that it was because the shepherds represented the Jewish people and the magi (the three kings) represented the Gentile (non-Jewish) world. In other words, everyone was drawn to the Lord. But still, why shepherds?

Perhaps they were chosen for a simple reason. The shepherds were just there, in the right place and the right time. Who else would be awake at midnight? Who else would be out on the hillside beneath the arc

of the mighty sky?

More relevant to us is their reaction to the news brought by the angelic host. The shepherds should inspire us to ask ourselves: what is my reaction to the news? The prophet Isaiah says the reaction should be "abundant joy and great rejoicing." St. Paul tells us that the message gives us the opportunity to live "temperately, justly, and devoutly."

The angels' message invites us to rejoice because Christ is born again in our hearts. The angels sing—but their song only makes sense to those waiting, hoping, and believing. Why shepherds? Why not? They cluster around the crib to remind us that Christmas belongs to the simple people who hear, accept, and come to this amazing scene.



### Christmas Day Meal Blessing

Let us pray. God of love, Father of all, the darkness that covered the earth has given way to the bright dawn of your Word made flesh. Make us a people of this light. Make us faithful to your Word, that we may bring your life to a waiting world. By the coming of your Son, Jesus, may the hungry be filled with good things, and may our families and our home be blessed. Bless this food on our Christmas table, which is a gift from you. And let us pray for all those affected by the coronavirus: may the dead rest in peace, their families be consoled, the sick be restored to full health, healthcare workers be kept safe, and may all of us take great care in following health restrictions. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

# Continue to Celebrate Christmas

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For Catholics, December 25 is only  
the beginning of the Christmas season.

## **The Feast of the Holy Family (Sunday, December 27)**

This feast is celebrated on the Sunday after Christmas. It is a fitting day to thank God for our own families and pray for a deepening of mutual love, in imitation of the Holy Family.

## **The Feast of Mary, the Mother of God (Friday, January 1)**

The octave day of Christmas is both a feast honoring Mary, the Mother of God, and a day for Prayer for World Peace. Our celebration of the New Year can be deepened by prayer that our world will be open to the peace Jesus offers.

## **The Feast of the Epiphany (traditionally January 6 or the Sunday following the Feast of the Holy Family, January 3)**

*Epiphany* means “manifestation,” and so this feast is the celebration of God’s glory being manifested to all nations, symbolically through the Magi. This is a good day to set the Magi in the nativity scene and share their story from the Gospel of Matthew. Holding back one gift from Christmas, it is a great day to give that gift to a family member in memory of the Magi’s gifts to the Lord.

## **The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (Sunday, January 10)**

This is the final “Christmas” feast and commemorates God’s revelation of the divinity of Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan River. It is a good day to celebrate our own baptism, our “new birth” in Christ and our entrance into his Church.

### **Did You Know?**

The birthplace of Jesus, “Bethlehem” means “house of bread.” Many ancient commentators interpret this as prefiguring the Eucharist. Jesus came to earth in the “house of bread,” and comes to us in the form of Living Bread, every time we receive him under the forms of bread and wine in the Blessed Sacrament.

We wish you & your loved ones a grace-filled and safe Christmas  
season.