



Nativity of the Lord  
December 25, 2025  
Fr. John Linden

Again, Merry Christmas and welcome to guests, family members and those who may have just. This is your first time coming even to a Catholic Mass for Christmas. What a gift it is again to have this time of year, to slow it all down for a moment and to reflect. And so what I want to do is to help us reflect. I want to read the rest of the story. What we took today is the Gospel from the night because everybody wants to hear about the birth of Jesus. But I want to finish the story, which would have been the gospel for the dawn again, continuing Luke.

When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, let us go then to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us. So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child.

All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

So that's the rest of the story of what happened that morning. And at the same time, we can account for many things that were going on that were extremely, obviously very good, what they had seen. And I last night had all the kids come up and sit around the altar the four o' clock yesterday afternoon. And we went through questions just like we do with our school masses. And the first questions I asked were, what are some of the good things that happened that night in Bethlehem? And right off the bat, right to the top, first one, they had baby Jesus. What greater good has there ever been in the world?

Zero. Zero good. Except in the sense when he gave his life for us. But he had to give it, he had to receive it first. He had to receive and be incarnated and brought in. So today when we do the Creed, at that point where we speak of Jesus being carnated, we're going to genuflect, if you can genuflect, at that moment, slow down a moment and try to reflect on what happened. There's nothing greater.

What else happened good that night? Well, they arrived safely in Bethlehem. I mean, that was quite a trip, quite a trip. But they got there and they were safe. Mary had a manger to place him in. She could have had nothing, could have been out in the cold, out in nowhere. But she had a nice little cozy manger with some hay and straw to keep him warm. The angels appeared with a great message that night in the midst of all any trival they were in. And they were all amazed at what the angel, the angels had said to the shepherds. I should say the shepherds came to them. Mary reflected on all these things in her heart.

So many good things happened that night and we could continue to recount. But then I asked what bad, what difficult things, trials happened that night?

You know, we look at the manger scene and see it, oh, so cute and beautiful. Any women in the room given birth in a manger, in a stable? I should say. I'd hope not hope that. You haven't had to do that. They had to travel all night when she was pregnant, for days. 80 miles they had to travel. It's 80 miles from Galilee, all the way down to Bethlehem or up in Jerusalem. Anywhere around Jerusalem is up, even if it isn't altitude. But it is because it's a hilly country. So they had to go up 80 miles.

We have her on a donkey, but that's not necessarily true. They were very poor. They may not have had a donkey. She might have walked pregnant 80 miles. No room for them in the inn, of course, no room in the Hyatt Regency, whatever. There was no hotel. And the ones that were, were full. They had to stay in a stable. And if you listen, if you listen to the second, the morning gospel, as I read it, they weren't alone. As you heard, when the shepherds came and told them what the angels had said, it said, **all** who heard it were



amazed. They wouldn't have said that if it was just Joseph and Mary. They would have said they heard it, but it was all. That means they weren't the only ones in the stable. Mary didn't have a private room to have a child. There were a bunch of people in Bethlehem because of the census. They had no hospital room, no doctor, no instructions on how to take care of a firstborn baby, none of that.

But then I asked the kids, was Jesus with them in all of that, the good and the bad? Yes, all the way from the beginning in her womb. Jesus was there in the midst of it. And so then I asked them, you know, and I'm going to ask all of you to reflect on all the good things you've had in life, all the things where you are very, very aware of God's presence.

And then all, then I want you to reflect on some of the things where it's been really tough. And you don't see Jesus. You don't feel his presence. You don't even think he's doing anything. Is he still with you in all that?

Of course he is. You know, I was reflecting, too, again, as I said earlier today, of all the things that we've been through, as everybody knows, or many people know and some might know, five of my original gang, my immediate family members, all gone. Four of them in less than two years. Basically, just over two years. And a lot of people don't know about the first one, my brother, 37 years ago, who passed. So five of them, each and every one of them. When I reflect back, there was some moment that God showed a sign that said, it's okay, you leave them with me, and you and I are going to go on. We got work to do. So every one of them came, oh, they were terrible, tragic, but they came with some little bitty light.

Mary, tonight or this morning or last night, when she's reflecting, she's not reflecting on travel. And I mean, that was terrible. She's reflecting on the baby. She's reflecting. She might reflect on that difficulty. But what in that difficulty, where was God in all of that and their persistence in doing what they believed he wanted them to do?

Note how God comes as a babe. Is there anything more joyful in the world than a baby? I don't think so. Is there anything easier to take care of in the world than a baby? Okay, being a little facetious there. Probably nothing harder to take care of. There's nothing that brings more joy and more work than a baby and a child. That's how God presented himself in the world, the greatest joy. But no one has ever challenged me more than God. It's funny how it all comes together in God.

And so what I encouraged everyone last night and will again today, and I know most of us do, and I hope all of us do. But if there are anyone watching, that is to come to Jesus to bring it all. You know, there are so many. There's a lot of us who come to Mass and, you know, we come to Christmas, maybe Easter or a couple times here and there. But as I said, the children are not going to learn how to bring all the good and all the bad if they don't come off to Jesus and see him in all the good and all. Because, yeah, not every Sunday is a great day. Some are, some are not. Some of the weeks are beautiful and joyful and there's all kinds of things happening. Some are terrible weeks.

And if I'm not getting used to from a little age to bringing that to Jesus and reflecting on where has he been in this week, I won't do that. I tend, just like we all do, to say, well, he's nowhere and why do I come to Him? What can he do? And that can be the pattern I get myself into. I did it. I did it especially right after that first death, way back in 1988. I did it for about 10 years. Where's God in all this?

Then the reflections came.

And so this is a beautiful night. Once a year we do it, but it's a once a year thing where we can take something. And I always like to say this in our reflection. Think of those things that are good. Okay? Wow. You were in that, Lord, those I call manger moments. Because what did Mary do with the most precious, the greatest gift that ever came into this world? She put him in a manger. And so you too, put all those good things that you can recall.



Again, she wasn't thinking about the trip and its misery. She was thinking about how God was in the trip. Take all those manger moments that God has given to you, any one of them. Put them in the manger in your heart. Keep them there. Because there will be dark days when you have to remember, when you have to recall. Our mother taught us how to reflect so that we can keep these, all these things, the presence of the Lord in all things. So, my brothers and sisters, this is a quiet night, a joyful night, a night when we can bring all our difficulties, all our terrors - a quiet morning to bring them all to the Lord and to be reflective of where he has been in all things.