

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

1. The Vigil Mass

Isaiah 62:1-5—The Marriage of God and Jerusalem

1. New Jerusalem: bride's new name "My Delight" (*Hephzibah*) and "Married" (*Beulah*)
2. The Bridegroom: God the "builder" will "marry" Jerusalem his Bride (cf. Isa 54:1)

Matthew 1:1-25—The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

1. Why the Genealogy? The *family story* of Abraham (Gen 12) and David (2 Sam 7)
2. Angel's Message: his name, "Jesus" (Aramaic *Yeshua*) = "the LORD Saves"
3. The Virginal Conception: Emmanuel: "God is with us" (Isaiah 7:14)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

1. God's "one reason" to reveal himself: his "sheer gratuitous love" (CCC 218-19, 2560)
2. Jesus = "God saves": reveals Jesus' *identity* (God) and *mission* (salvation) (CCC 430)

2. Midnight Mass

Isaiah 9:2-6—The Birth of the *Divine King*

1. A Davidic King: upon "the throne of David" and over "his kingdom" he will reign
2. A Divine King: "God-Hero" (NAB) or "Mighty God" (RSV) (Hebrew *El gibor*)

Luke 2:1-14—The Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem

1. Davidic King: Jesus born in Bethlehem, "the city of David" (2:3, 11; cf. 1 Sam 16)
2. Divine King: Angelic pronouncement: "A savior, who is Christ the Lord"
 - a. Christ: Greek *Christos* ("Anointed One"); translation of Hebrew *mashiah*
 - b. Lord: Greek *Kyrios* ("Lord"); translation of Hebrew *YHWH*

Living Tradition

1. Swaddling Clothes → The Shroud of Jesus' Burial
2. Bethlehem ("house of bread")/Manger → Eucharistic Bread of Life

3. Christmas Day Mass

Isaiah 52:7-10—The "Good News" of the Coming of the LORD

1. The "Good News": the "return of the LORD to Zion; the coming of God (cf. Isaiah 40)

John 1:1-18—The Word Became Flesh and 'Tabernacled' Among Us

1. The "Word" (Gk *logos*) was "with God" and "was God" (Gk *theos*)
2. The Word became flesh and "dwelt/tabernacled" (Gk *skênoō*) among us (cf. Exod 25)

Catechism 456-460: Why Did the Word Become Flesh? Four Reasons

The Mass Readings Explained

- 1. To *Save Us* by Reconciling us to God
- 2. To Reveal *God’s Love for Us*
- 3. To be *Our Model of Holiness*
- 4. To make us *Partakers of the Divine Nature*

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (Nativity of the Lord, Christmas)

1. In the readings of the Christmas Vigil Mass, God is depicted as a divine Bridegroom whose plan is to “marry” his people in an everlasting covenant of love. How does it affect your view of God to think of him as a Bridegroom? To realize that “it is he who first seeks us” (CCC 2560)?

2. In the readings for Midnight Mass, Christ is revealed as the divine king who is born “in a humble stable, into a poor family” (CCC 525)? According to the Catechism, in order for us to enter in Jesus’ kingdom, we too “must humble ourselves and become little” (CC 526)? What are some practical ways to do this, so that “the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us” (CCC 526)?

3. In the Christmas Day Mass Readings, we read the great Prologue of the Gospel of John about “the Word” becoming Flesh (John 1:1-18) and the four reasons given by the Catechism for the Incarnation (CCC 456-460). Did any one of these four reasons touch your heart? Why?

For Further Reading in the Catechism

- 1. The Good News: God has sent Jesus Christ, the Son of God (CCC 422-455)
- 2. The Incarnation: Why Did the Word Become Flesh? (CCC 456-483)
- 2. The Virgin Birth and the Mystery of Christmas (CCC 484-526)