

CHRISTMAS: A TIME FOR SHARING THE GOOD NEWS OF JOY

Christmas Day
The Nativity of Our Lord
December 25, 2007

Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 98
Hebrews 1:1-4 [5-12]
John 1:1-14

Two Nativity Scenes

Scene One. Grandson Scotty was born on August 14, 1995. An inoperative heart condition took him from us after only two days. In those two days, in the half-darkness and quiet of a hospital room, he lay in his mother's arms, "swaddled" as the older Bibles say. His periwinkle blue eyes sparkled and looked now at his father, now at his mother, now at his grandmother Mary, now at me. His eyes, so clear and all-knowing, delivered a message to us about God's purpose even for this short life. We received a two-day long family summons to love and faith. Well-formed lips opened and formed unspoken, but divine words to us about joy in sorrow and light in darkness. When the doctor entered the room for a final check up, a small bubble formed on Scotty's lips. It escaped and soared heavenward, where we even today imagine it as a periwinkle star, blue in the heavens and reflecting God's glory.

Scene Two. Another baby, named Jesus of Nazareth, was born in the reign of King Herod, which ended in 4 B.C. In those first hours and days of Jesus' infancy there was swaddling and nursing, joy and hope. Jesus' eyes no doubt rolled this way and that, radiating joy and divine glory toward those nearby who seemed but shadowy figures of parents or shepherds or even kings. Perhaps each blink of those eyes tapped out a message about a divine purpose; perhaps they already hinted at sorrow for Mary. His well-formed lips would have open and formed his own unspoken words to Mary and Joseph.

The Bible is no stranger to nativities, whether the nativity of a grandson, or of the Christ Child. One of our readings (Isaiah 52:7-10) invites us to think of nativity as the arrival of a messenger with good news. Another reading (Psalm 98) proclaims what every mother and father knows about a newborn child—it makes lots of joyful noises to the Lord. Hebrews 1:1-4 and John 1:1-14 take us, however, to the center of the mystery of every nativity -- even when nativities bring us sorrow and apparent darkness, they also reveal God's glory and translate darkness into light.

The Reflection for Christmas Day was prepared by Robert Hodgson, Ph.D., who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Dean of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

This day we remember to pray for: The Word become flesh. Lord Jesus, you came to earth as a baby to be our Savior and to set us free from the bondage of sin. We rejoice and celebrate your birth and your making known to us God's wonderful and everlasting love. Amen.

Activity Corner: "Christmas Litany"

Supplies needed: Bible.

Ask a member of your family to read John 1:1-14 as a litany prayer, with the rest of the family members responding together, "AMEN! JESUS OUR TRUE LIGHT HAS COME INTO THE WORLD" at the end of verses 2, 4, 8, 10, 13, 14. Conclude your devotion time by singing together "Joy to the World, the Lord is Come!" or one of your favorite Christmas carols.