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Merry Christmas & A Peaceful New Year



Christmas Miracles

So many people miss the real meaning of Christmas because they don't take the time to remember the multiple miracles that occurred in conjunction with Jesus' birth. This short story "A Flesh and Blood Christmas Miracle," Dr. Ralph F. Wilson brings home the message of these Christmas miracles in a heartfelt way.

THE MIRACLE OF BIRTH

"What an amazing miracle birth is, the beginning of a brand new human life!" The birth of Jesus of Nazareth is a miracle on a number of fronts, first and foremost, that here is another healthy baby boy born to an exhausted young mother and a father so relieved that he can burst with joy. Jesus has those tiny little fingers and toes that fascinate every new mother, including Mary. He is human in every way.

THE MIRACLE OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER

It is a miracle, of course, that Mary is a virgin. The New Testament account is very specific. Mary and her fiancé have not yet slept together as husband and wife. But an angel of the Lord, Gabriel, announces to Mary that she will be the mother of the Messiah, that her son will be called the Son of the Highest, and that this son will be conceived in her not by human means but by the Holy Spirit of God Himself. In a very real, physical sense, Jesus is the Son of God. Christmas is the miracle of the Virgin Mother.

THE MIRACLE OF JOSEPH'S DREAM

It is a miracle, too, that Joseph believes Mary. A man, even a man in love, finds it hard to understand how his fiancée can be with child. Jealous creatures, men are inclined to believe the worst. But Joseph, too, is visited by an angel who tells him that the boy will be called Jesus, for He will save his people from their sins. Joseph's trust



The Adoration of the Shepherds by Prospero Fontana



in the angel and his continued love for Mary and her child is a Christmas miracle in itself.

THE MIRACLE OF BETHLEHEM

It is a miracle that Jesus is born in Bethlehem. His parents, after all, are residents of Nazareth, a four-day journey and 90 dusty miles to the north. The only thing that could have brought about such a last minute journey is a court order. And that's what Joseph received, a summons from the royal court of Augustus Caesar to appear in his ancestor's birthplace for a census. Since Joseph is a direct descendent of King David, he returns to the town where David was born.

"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel." (Matthew 2:4-6; quoting Micah 5:2)

And so God arranges a trip for Mary and Joseph -- a rather inconvenient trip for a woman nearly full term -- a trip to fulfill a prophecy.

THE MIRACLE OF ANGEL HERALDS

It is a miracle that on the night of Jesus' birth, shepherds from the surrounding hillsides file into the (Cont. on page 3)

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Christmas Greetings from Our Chaplains

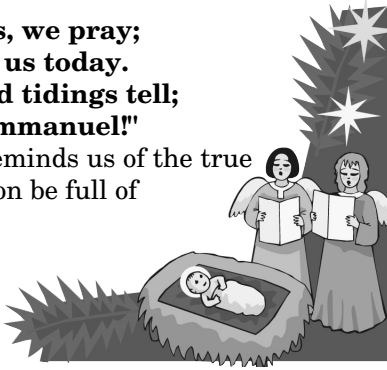
"O Holy Child of Bethlehem! Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in, Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas Angels, The great glad tidings tell;
Oh come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel!"

The simple message of Christmas reflected above, reminds us of the true meaning of this Holy Season. May your Christmas Season be full of His Love and the New Year filled with His Peace.

Rev. Walter J. Ptak - National Chaplain

Rev. Canon Anthony D. Iwuc - 1st Vice Chaplain

Msgr. Stanley E. Milewski, P.A. - 2nd Vice Chaplain



(Cont. from page 1) stable where a baby and mother now rest. The shepherds told of a heavenly visitation:

"I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:10-12)

The shepherds - acknowledged as the lowest rung of society - were overjoyed to find the newborn child lying in a manger, just as the angel has told them, and to be called by God as witnesses to this holy event. They told Mary and Joseph about how, not just one angel, but a huge army of angels joined in a heavenly chorus singing - even shouting - the words: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, goodwill to men." (Luke 2:14)

THE MIRACLE OF THE MANGER

That Jesus was first laid in a manger is a miracle, too, when you think about it. The swaddling clothes that enfolded the baby Jesus were not unique, but the manger was. It was a vivid symbol of the poverty of the baby's parents, and their poor accommodations. The crude manger sends an astounding message that God was willing to humble Himself from the height of glory, to descend to -- and become -- the poorest of the poor. The miracle of the manger lies in God's unfathomable humility.

THE MIRACLES OF THE STAR

It is a miracle that when Jesus was born, His star appeared boldly in the winter sky. That wise men from the East saw it and knew that it signified the birth of the King of the Jews. It was a miracle: 1) that these wise men and their servants traveled on camels nearly 1,000 miles to see the Child; 2) that they brought gold, frankincense and myrrh; 3) that the star led them to the very place where the Holy Family was staying; and 4) that these wealthy members of the royal class prostrated themselves on the dirt floor before the young Child. These are the miracles of the star.

THE MIRACLE OF INCARNATION

But the greatest miracle of Christmas was that this squalling, tiny newborn is God Himself entering the human plane as flesh and blood.

The miracle of Christmas is that the God of infinite glory and radiance became human - and bound Himself by bodily limitations. This was by far the most truly remarkable miracle of this flesh-and-blood Christmas.

The Apostle Paul puts it this way:

"[Christ Jesus], who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness." (Philippians 2:6-7)

Christian thinkers have been very clear about this: Jesus isn't a human pretending to be God, nor God pretending to be human, but Jesus is fully divine AND fully human, Jesus is the God-Man.

So when we view the newborn Christ Child seeking nourishment at his mother's breast, we are viewing God Himself in human flesh. It is an awesome miracle, a miracle that brought amazement long ago to both Mary and Joseph, participants in the miracle.

And in this newborn, flesh-and-blood Baby Boy, we view the miracle of miracles, God becoming "incarnate" -- literally, "in flesh," from the Latin word *carne*.

We even know the purpose of this miracle of incarnation! The angel told Joseph: "You shall call his name Jesus, FOR he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). It is only by becoming human that God could offer Himself as a fitting atonement for sins committed by very human sinners.

The Christmas story continues. This flesh-and-blood Baby grows to be a flesh-and-blood Man. And on the night before He was betrayed, He took bread and blessed it, and said it was His Flesh. He took wine and blessed it, and said it was His Blood. And the very next day His Flesh was torn and His Blood was shed to save us, His people, from our sins.

What is Christmas all about? It is about Jesus, and that amazing day when God Himself send His Son among humanity as a flesh-and-blood Baby Boy.

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May you experience, first-hand, the miracle of God's love in your life as you celebrate this Christmas season. May His Love be your constant companion as you journey through the upcoming year 2009. May you be abundantly blessed and may you be compassionate enough to be a blessing unto others. - *From the PRCUA Officers, Board & Staff*