

background is the dark cave where He was born. In the cave are an ox and a donkey guarding the newborn Babe. Fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 1: 3, the ox knows his Master, and the donkey his Master's crib; but Israel does not know Him, and the people have not regarded Him. The long ray of light from the star points directly to the cave. This ray comes from the star and travels to all parts of the world. It teaches that this bright star is an astronomical happening and is a messenger from heaven announcing the birth of Jesus.



This icon shows a young shepherd playing a reed instrument. It reveals that the music of the humans was added to the hymn of the angels. The angels serve two purposes in the Nativity of Christ. They give glory to God and announce the good news to all mankind.

This scene on the right shows the two women Joseph brought to take care of the Christ Child. They are bathing Him just as any baby is bathed. The humanity of Jesus is clearly shown in this setting. The tree is a symbol of the Tree of Jesse, which refers to Isaiah 11:1-2, that a shoot will sprout from the stump of Jesse, and will blossom. King David was often mentioned as the son of Jesse and Jesus was from the House of David.



The Holy Icon of the Nativity reminds one to praise and glorify the Birth of Christ. The celebration of Christmas each year serves to remind each and everyone of us that Christ came for you and me.

*(Excerpted from: www.goarch.org)



This spot is located in the Holy Land and is beneath the altar of the Nativity. It is said to be the spot where Jesus was born. The floor is incased in white marble, where, shines a 14 pointed silver star marking the exact spot surrounded by the Latin inscription: **HIC DE VIRGINE MARIA JESUS CHRISTUS NATUS EST. 1717.** (Here Jesus Christ was born to the Virgin Mary).

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Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Feast Day: December 25



**GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST
AND
PEACE TO MEN OF GOODWILL!**

Feast Day of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

*The Feast of the Nativity of Jesus is one of the most joyful days of the Church, and, ranks next to the greatest holiday, the Resurrection. It is also known as the "Incarnation of Christ." This means that Jesus became a man and came into the world to save us. We also refer to this joyous feast as Christmas.

The story of the Nativity of Christ is told in the Holy Scriptures. The story is found in Matthew 1: 18-25 and in Luke 2: 1-20. As the story is told by the Apostles, the Roman Empire was powerful. The Romans had conquered much of the then known world. Judea and Samaria, what we know today as Israel, were included in their conquests. Emperor Augustus ordered that a census be taken in all his lands. He needed to know how many people lived in the empire so that he could tax them. Everyone had to go to the town of their family's origin to register for the census. This meant that Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem. They were descendants of King David and Bethlehem was the City of David.

Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth and it was a great distance from Bethlehem. It was about 100 miles over very rugged roads. Moreover, Mary was expecting the baby and it was almost time for her to give birth. Bethlehem was a small town and there were many descendants of David who had come to register for the census. By the time Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem there was no place for them to stay. Joseph tried very hard to find a place to sleep that evening. There was no room at the inn. Finally, Joseph found a cave-like place where they could rest. This place was used by shepherds to protect their sheep in stormy weather. It was here that Mary gave birth to Jesus. The baby was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the straw in the manger.

That night the shepherds were out in the fields guarding their sheep. Suddenly, there was a bright light which startled the shepherds. The light was so bright that it turned the night into daylight. The shepherds were frightened. Nothing such as this had ever happened. Soon an angel appeared and calmed them, saying that a Savior was born that day in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord, and that the

babe was wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Then a larger group of angels appeared praising and glorifying God and sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men" (Luke 2: 14). When the angels finished singing, the light began to dim until it was dark again. The shepherds decided to leave their flocks of sheep and go to Bethlehem to see what the angels had told them. When they got to Bethlehem, they found Mary, Joseph, and the infant



Some Wise Men came from the East for they knew of the coming of Jesus. They had seen a star announcing that a new king had been born to the Jews. They followed the star and came to Judea where King Herod was the governor. He was a wicked man and was feared and hated by the people. When Herod heard about the Wise Men looking for the child, he invited them to his palace and asked them to find the child so that he too could worship Him. But Herod was lying. He did not want anyone to take his place. The star led the Wise Men to Jesus where they fell to their knees and worshipped Him. They gave Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The Wise Men did not return to Herod, instead they returned to their native country by a different route.



The icon of the Nativity tells the story of Christ's birth from the Scriptures. It also shows that all creation is taking part in His birth. The angels give thanks with their song, the heavens give a star; the Wise Men give their gifts. The poor, humble shepherds give their praise and amazement, the earth gives the cave, and humanity gives the Virgin. The icon stresses the importance of the Theotokos, the Mother of Jesus, kneeling with crossed arms. The three stars for her virginity before, during and after the nativity. The Christ Child is in swaddling clothes and is lying in the manger. In the