

**Readings for the Solemnity of the Nativity of our Lord**  
*Extraordinary Form*

**Hebrews 1: 1-12**

In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word. When he had accomplished purification from sins, he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, as far superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say: “You are my son; this day I have begotten you”? Or again: “I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me”? And again, when he leads the first-born into the world, he says: “Let all the angels of God worship him.” Of the angels, he says: “He makes his angels winds and his ministers a fiery flame,” but of the Son: “Your throne, O God, stands forever and ever; and a righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom. You loved justice and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions”; and: “At the beginning, O Lord, you established the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; and they will all grow old like a garment. You will roll them up like a cloak, and like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.”

**John 1: 1-14**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man’s decision but of God. And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth.

## Mary Wrapped Him in Swaddling Clothes

Ave Maria Catholic Church. December 25, 2024. Fr. David M Vidal

*“The time came for [Mary] to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Lk 2:6-7).*

These words should move our hearts. The angel foretold this moment at Nazareth: *“You will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High” (Lk 1:31).*

Israel had been waiting for this moment for centuries. All humanity longed with great expectation for this time: when the world would be saved, and God would make all things new.

We can imagine Mary's interior preparation and the love with which she approached that hour. A brief passage from Scripture summarizes it: *“She wrapped him in swaddling clothes.”* However, the few words that make up that sacred declaration help us discover Mary's preparation for that moment.

The swaddling clothes were ready so the child would receive a fitting welcome. However, there is no room at the inn. In some way, humanity is expecting God, waiting for him to draw near. But when the moment comes, there is no room for him.

We are so busy. We need all the space and all the time for our own things, so we forget something so essential as preparing a room for God with us. And the more room we make for our little things, the less room there is for God.

The prologue of Saint John's Gospel introduces this tragedy: *“He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him” (Jn 1:11).*

This gospel passage applies to the people of Bethlehem: The Son of David comes to his own city but has to be born in a stable because there is no room for him at the inn.

These words apply to Israel: Jesus is sent among his own, but they do not want him.

These words apply to everyone: The Creator of heaven and earth comes to this world, and He is received with apathy and disinterest. These words ultimately touch each one of us: Do we have time for God? Do we make room for Him? Can he enter into our lives?

However, not everyone rejected Him. There are so many good examples of those who received Jesus.

Let us look at the Christmas scene.

In some Christmas scenes from the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, the stable is depicted as a crumbling palace. Some aspects of the palace's former splendor can still be recognized, but now it has become a ruin—the walls are falling down—actually, it has become a stable.

Benedict XVI explains that this interpretation expresses something of the truth hidden in the mystery of Christmas. David's kingdom is almost in ruins. Others rule over the Holy Land. Joseph, the descendant of David, is a simple artisan; the palace has become a shelter.

David himself had begun life as a shepherd. It seemed impossible that a shepherd boy such as he could become the King of Israel.

In the stable of Bethlehem, the very town of David, his kingdom starts again in a new way – with a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. And Mary was ready to receive him. She wrapped Jesus in swaddling clothes.

Now, Mary could wrap the Redeemer of the world in swaddling clothes because the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

Gregory of Nyssa presents this idea in one of his Christmas homilies by reflecting on the Gospel of John: "*He made his dwelling among us – He set his tent among us*" (Jn 1:14).

Gregory of Nyssa applies this passage to the tent of our body, which is worn out and weak, exposed to pain and suffering. He also applies this passage to the whole universe, torn and disfigured by sin.

Christ set his tent among us. Not to rebuild an ordinary palace. He came to restore beauty and dignity to creation and, most particularly, to humanity: to us!

The restoration of humanity started when the *Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*, and now, we can see his face and contemplate him: a child wrapped in swaddling clothes.

This is why, at Christmas, the angels rejoice. The earth is restored to good order by virtue of God's mercy for us. A new light comes to humanity, which has been living in darkness. Harmony between human will and divine will is reestablished. The beauty and dignity of the old palace are seen again and they are manifested in a much greater way: God is with us. God is our brother. Desire something better!

Now we can sing with the angels: "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!*" (Lk 2:14). This is our new song. A song of praise and gratitude!

Angels and men can sing together, and in this way, the beauty of the universe is expressed in the beauty of the song of praise.

In the stable at Bethlehem, Heaven and Earth meet. Heaven has come down to Earth because Heaven is where Jesus is. If we approach the manger where Jesus is with humility, then we touch Heaven.

Then, the Earth, too, is made new. With the humility of the shepherds, the humility of the magi, the humility of Saint Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us run towards the Child in the stable! Let us contemplate the child wrapped in swaddling clothes with love! Then, his joy will touch us and make the world more radiant.

Let us welcome the light of Jesus in our lives. It is the light of grace. Then, the stable that is built with our weaknesses will become a beautiful palace, and in the palace of our hearts, Jesus will be our King.