

The Journey

Daily Readings Week 1

Continue the Journey to Bethlehem by reflecting on these scriptures as you prepare for Christ's birth.

MONDAY 12.06.21 Matthew 1:18-25

The 2006 film, *The Nativity Story*, showed Mary washing Joseph's feet as he slept, worn out from their trip to Bethlehem. To the unborn Jesus she said, "You will have a good and decent man to raise you." That's a fine summary of Matthew's portrait of Joseph. He obeyed God, and nurtured and protected his bride and her child.

TUESDAY 12.07.21 Matt. 1:18-20, Deut. 22:20-24

In Israelite culture, a betrothal was as binding as marriage. Some must have condemned her (and Jesus as illegitimate—see John 8:41). It was even possible that she might be stoned to death, as the law in Deuteronomy said.

WEDNESDAY 12.08.21 Matthew 1:1-17

The way Matthew started Jesus' story feels strange, even boring to most of us. But family records were of critical importance in Jesus' day. King Herod the Great, despised by most Jews because he was half Edomite, actually destroyed official registers so that no one else could prove a purer ancestry than his own! In verse 1, Matthew said three significant things about Jesus: he was "the Messiah," the "son of David," and the "son of Abraham."

THURSDAY 12.09.21 Genesis 37:1-11, 39:6-10, 41:39-43

Joseph was named for a great man in Israel's history. The first Joseph was the patriarch Jacob's favorite son. His story filled Genesis chapters 37-50. Known for his integrity and faithfulness, he eventually became first minister of Egypt. In that role, he saved Egypt (and Jacob's family) from a great famine. And, like the later Joseph, he recognized God's messages to him in dreams.

FRIDAY 12.10.21 Matthew 2:13-16, 19-21

Joseph did far more than stand by the manger while the shepherds worshipped the baby. Matthew said Joseph kept Mary and baby Jesus safe from Herod's murderous paranoia. Herod killed some of his own sons who were potential rivals for his throne. He certainly didn't flinch from murdering boys in Bethlehem to try to wipe out the promised Messiah.

SATURDAY 12.11.21 Luke 2:41-52

This is Joseph's last appearance in the Gospels. When Jesus began his public ministry, 18 years later, Joseph was apparently deceased. Here, he and Mary are worried parents and we sense the unique challenges they faced. Mary said "your father and I," meaning Joseph. Jesus, while valuing and obeying (verse 51) Joseph, said being in the Temple meant being in his Father's (God's) house. Luke says Joseph and Mary struggled to understand.