

**5. December 2020**

**The Long Road to Bethlehem, Part 6**  
**“The birth of the Lord is already near”**

*“But when the completion of the time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law to redeem the subjects of the Law, so that we could receive adoption as sons.” (Gal 4:4-5).*

The archangel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary in Nazareth and it was a decisive hour in the history of salvation. God's love chose the person from among his people to whom he wanted to entrust his son. It was a woman who, as we know for certain from the teachings of the Catholic Church, was kept free from original sin.

While Eve allowed herself to be seduced into disobedience, Mary gave God all her trust and the answer of love, which completely releases God's action on us. Her YES to the will of God meant becoming the Mother of the Son of God.

*“The angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God.’” (Lk 1:30-35)*

Let it sink in deeply: God takes a person so much into his plan of salvation that he makes Mary the Mother of his Son, who is then born in Bethlehem. What grace and closeness the Lord gives us and what a wonderful response of Mary, whom God calls to be the true Mother of all believers.

We have now come very close to Bethlehem with Mary and Jesus, who are entrusted to the just Joseph. It rests still the time it takes for a child to be born in the womb of a woman.

From the testimony of the Scriptures we learn that the Virgin Mary, even before giving birth, had an encounter with her base Elizabeth, who carried John the Baptist under her heart (*cf. Lk 1:39-56*).

She testifies with joy and in the Holy Spirit:

*“Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? Look, the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.” (verses 42-45)*

And Mary rejoices:

*“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour; because he has looked upon the humiliation of his servant. Yes, from now onwards all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name” (verses 46-49).*

Soon afterwards, Mary and Joseph set off for Bethlehem. We hear the famous words from the Gospel:

*“Now it happened that at this time Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be made of the whole inhabited world. This census - the first - took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to be registered, each to his own town. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee for Judaea, to David's town called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.” (Lk. 2:1-5)*

With this immediate outlook on the birth of the Lord, we conclude the first week of Advent and then return to a closer look at the birth just before Christmas, when the Holy Family has already arrived and is looking for shelter.

Before that, during the coming week, we contemplate the “birth of the Lord” within ourselves.

On Sunday we will first give a talk in YouTube and then during the week we will go deeper with the daily reflections.

And do not forget: The Christmas concert of Harpa Dei on Christmas Eve!