

## Advent Reflections: Week Four

Luke 2:1, 4-18, 20

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the Inn.



And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today 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 cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.



- *Joseph and Mary are not yet ‘married’, but still engaged at nearly 9 months of pregnancy. Imagine how it must have been for them to live in their village in this state of half-matrimony, and pregnant.*
- *Bearing a child in a poor country, in an occupied land, being forced to travel under duress and difficult terrain, leads to poor prognosis for a successful birth. Imagine the fears, anxieties, even frustrations of such a seemingly ‘untimely’ travel.*
- *Imagine being Mary, now giving birth for the first time, away from her family for support, and seemingly only Joseph to assist with such an intimate, vulnerable, and scary delivery in an unsanitary condition, with no one to share in the final outcome.*
- *Being a Shepherd is like being an illegal alien, with no rights, no respect, no value, no status. What might it be like to have received a ‘visit’ from Angels? Would you believe it? Enough to leave your job and go find out if its true?*
- *It hasn’t been very common, or ‘realistic’, today to have a vision like this. Have you ever gotten some sort of ‘sign’ that you wanted to believe? And how did you share it with others? How did they respond? Did it make a difference in what you believed?*
- *Once the Shepherds ‘saw’ the Holy Family, they then ‘knew’ what they heard was true! Where in your life did some circumstance confirm some vision/message/impression from God?*
- *What do you want to believe about the Birth of Christ? What might you need from God to ‘prove’ to you that its true? Is there anything in the way of you telling others what you found out?*
- *There is a Mary in each of us...carrying the seed of hope ready for a timely birth. There is a Joseph in each of us...accepting by faith to be the ‘protector’ of the seed, assisting in the birthing. There is a Shepherd in each of us...some lowly unimportant part that wants to believe, needs to believe, goes out to ‘see’ that it is truly true.*

**MAY YOU HEAR THE ANGELS SING IN EVERY PART OF YOU!**