

The Sunday before the Nativity
The Sunday of the Holy Fathers
Matthew 1:25

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias; And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.(KJV)

The Sunday of the Holy Fathers

The current Gospel is prescribed for the Sunday before the Feast of the Nativity of Jesus Christ each year. From Abraham to Joseph, the ancestral lineage is traced.

The Church wants believers to think back through the centuries and understand there is an order according to God which takes place. Mary's virgin birth of the Savior is central to the Gospel.

St. Matthew's Gospel identifies JESUS as the savior. Christ's birth was interpreted as "God with us." On the Feast of the Nativity, church choirs proclaim with great joy, "God is with us!"

The Church is celebrating the Forefeast of the Nativity. This is a time of anticipation and continued reflection on the importance of Jesus Christ taking on human flesh.

Just as Joseph came to understand within himself the virgin birth of Christ and the action of the Holy Spirit in Christ's birth, each believer learns from the teachings of the Church about this joyful mystical birth.

Hearts and minds are filled with anticipation at this time of the Forefeast. The Feast of the Nativity of Jesus Christ always brings the message of hope. In these challenging days of our lives, the message of hope is certainly welcomed.

Believers have had to contend with major changes to daily life. The Lord has been the prevailing hope throughout difficult times in history. A careful look at the lives mentioned in the Gospel genealogy will reflect God at work through the ages.

Now is the time for believers to build on the hope residual in Jesus Christ. Now is the time to increase love and commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ's birth fills receptive hearts with love, peace and joy.

The Feast of the Nativity of Jesus Christ is a new beginning for all living in Christ. Renewal in Christ occurs in each believer with the arrival of the Feast of the Nativity. The Nativity Fast has been a time of great preparation for this feast.

Order and purpose exist in the Church to guide believers from Holy Baptism to departure from this life. The feasts of the Church give structure to the Church year and to the lives of believers ardently following the Church calendar.

Each day offers nourishment, strength, inspiration and purpose for believers. Believers are never abandoned by the Lord God. Jesus Christ's birth verifies God is with us!

The Christ Child is born in each heart welcoming and cherishing Him. This is a time of anticipatory joy, a time to savor the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph and Mary experienced the joy and honor of the Christ Child's birth.

Each believer in each century is able to participate in the unending joy emanating from Christ's birth. Welcoming hearts do not contain the joy of Christ's birth. Welcoming hearts share the joy of Christ in daily life, throughout life.