

Journey to Bethlehem

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INTRODUCTION

Our journey to Bethlehem opens with the Spirit and the Word huddled in darkness, whispering their plans and dreams into the silent void. It is a journey that begins with the original creative act of calling forth light, life, and those made in their own image.

Pray this prayer before each station.

As I make the journey toward Bethlehem with the Holy Family, I find in them a model of faith and living in the world. I adore you, O Jesus, and I bless you, because by your Incarnation and life you have changed my life and redeemed the world. Amen.

THE FIRST STATION

The Angel Visits Mary

...The angel Gabriel was sent from God
to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a
virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph,
of the house of David, and the virgin's
name was Mary.

Luke 1:26–27

An angel appears to a young woman in her small home in Nazareth and delivers confusing and frightening news. In Luke 1:28–38, we learn Mary is “greatly troubled” by what she hears, but certainly she is terrified as well. What does it mean to “have found favor with God” and be chosen for such an inconceivable task? To be a virgin and yet conceive. To be nearly a child herself and yet be a mother. To call a son Jesus and yet not have been with her

husband. “How can this be?” she asks, and it’s easy to understand her dismay and fear. And yet she comes to understand and accept. For the Holy Spirit brings her not only the seed of life but a glimpse of understanding. Just enough to move her forward to say yes, she will do this. “Behold,” she says to Gabriel, “I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”

Lord, whether I sense your touch and call resolutely or only as whisper or shadow, give me the courage to consider saying yes and the wisdom to ask for just enough clarity to move toward you. Amen.

THE SECOND STATION

Mary Visits Elizabeth

During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

Luke 1:39–40

Mary, carrying the life and promise of God within her, sets out to Judah to visit her cousin Elizabeth, an older woman who is six months pregnant even though she had been told she was unable to have children. She is an example and model for Mary in how the Spirit works to make the impossible possible. As Mary enters the house and calls out her greeting, the infant leaps inside Elizabeth, recognizing the special nature and purpose of Mary and the child

within her. And Elizabeth—somehow, impossibly—knows it, too. “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb,” she says (Luke 1:42). If Mary still has doubts about what was happening to her, her visit to Elizabeth is affirming and confirming. She is blessed because she dares to believe. For as she chooses faith, she is drawn ever closer to its source and sustenance, and she is changed forever.

*Lord, place the people and opportunities
you know I need in my life so my faith in
you grows stronger and more resolute.
Allow your Spirit to leap for joy within
me when I say your name. Amen.*