

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

Mass during the Day

Fr. Samuel Springuel

25 December, 2025

1st Reading Isaiah 52:7–10

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 98:1,2–3,3–4,5–6

2nd Reading Hebrews 1:1–6

Gospel John 1:1–18

The Psalm response assigned to today's Mass declares, "All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." What is this "salvation of God?" What exactly have "all the ends of the earth" seen?

They have seen a poor couple, the wife nearly 9 months pregnant, forced to undertake a long journey. Walking 12 hours a day, a healthy individual could get from Nazareth to Bethlehem in 3 days. For a young woman so pregnant the baby could come any day, the journey undoubtedly took longer. Even if Joseph found the donkey for Mary to ride that they are so often depicted with, I cannot but imagine that sitting on donkey back while so heavily pregnant wasn't much better. And all this to appease a capricious ruler who wanted a census that recorded not where people lived, but where they were from. AS if the world should conform to the way he thought it ought to be, rather than he conform to the world as it actually was.

What did they see?

They saw this couple arrive in Bethlehem only to find that there was no place for them to stay. The inns were full, though I'm sure someone with enough money could have found space, and the only place where they could get out of the weather was a stable: a place literally fit only for animals, not for giving birth.

What did they see?

They saw an angel appear in the heavens, announcing tidings of good news to shepherds, and being joined by the whole heavenly choir singing, "Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax."

What did they see?

They saw these shepherds, men who lived with their animals out in the field because all their worldly wealth was on the hoof. Having heard the good news from the angel, these lowly shepherds made their way to the stable to gaze in wonder at a new born child.

What did they see?

To this same stable they saw an entourage led by three magi come. It was to here, they said, that they had followed a star which heralded the birth of the King of the Jews.

What did they see?

They saw a young family, having already been forced to journey far from home, forced to flee further, into a foreign land, to escape the murderous intentions of a ruler more interested in quashing rivals than in governing justly.

What did they see?

They saw a weary family return home years later, the ruler they had fled from now dead, to pick up the life they had been forced to abandon.

What did they see?

They saw a child prodigy in the Temple, impressing the elders with his knowledge of the Torah while worrying his parents by not telling them where he was.

What did they see?

They saw a prophet in the desert cry out, "Prepare the way of the Lord." They saw him point to the child, now grown into a man, and declare, "Behold the lamb of God."

What did they see?

They followed the man and saw him heal every disease.

What did they see?

They saw him silence and cast out demons.

What did they see?

They saw a preacher, popular with the masses but contentious with the established elite.

What did they see?

They saw him condemned as a criminal and hung on a cross.

What did they see?

They saw an empty tomb where once a body had been laid.

What did they see? The mess of a human life, lived in poor circumstances. At times accompanied by great wonders, but mostly just going about the ordinariness of a poor life lived in relationship with God. Something so mundane as to be unremarkable most of the time, as to make one question those few extraordinary things and ask "did they really happen?"

What do *we* see? We are the nations, here at the ends of the earth. As we stand before this newborn babe, as we look at the course of his life, at his death, at his empty tomb, do we see the salvation of our God?