

“The Journey From Nazareth to Bethlehem” (Mary of Agreda)

Lk 2:1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled.

2:2 This was the first enrollment, when Quirini-us was governor of Syria.

2:3 And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city.

2:4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,

2:5 to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with Child.

2:6 And while They were there, the time came for Her to be delivered.

2:7 And She gave birth to Her first-born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Bethlehem is called the City of David because this is the town David was born. From the Book of Samuel it says:

1 Sam 16¹ The LORD said to Samuel: “How long will you grieve for Saul, whom I have rejected as king of Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen my king from among his sons.”

Bethlehem was changed from the name Ephrath. Gn (35:19) Located about 5 miles south of Jerusalem at an elevation of 100Ft higher. Beth means house. Lehem

means bread, thus "house of bread". Ephrath is known to mean fruitful land.

456. The most pure Mary and the glorious Saint Joseph departed from Nazareth for Bethlehem alone, poor and humble in the eyes of the world.



None of the mortals thought more of them than what was warranted by their poverty and humility. Hidden to the proud, and not penetrated by the wisdom of the flesh, Mary and Joseph did not walk alone, poor or despised, but prosperous, rich and in magnificence. They were most worthy of the immense love of the eternal Father and most estimable in His eyes. They carried with them the Treasure of heaven, the Deity itself. (Referring to Jesus in His Mother’s womb.) The whole court of the heavenly ministers (Angels) venerated them. They were accompanied by the ten thousand Angels, which as mentioned (No. 450), were appointed by God Himself as the servants of Mary during that whole journey. These heavenly squadrons marched along in human forms visible to

the heavenly Lady, brighter than so many suns.

457. In the midst of this royal army, hidden from the site of men, most holy Mary and Joseph proceeded on their way knowing that their feet would not be bruised by the stone of tribulation, since the Lord had commanded His Angels to be their defense and watchfulness. This command the most faithful Angels fulfilled with wonder and delight. They composed new songs in honor of the Lord, and in honor of the heavenly Mother, who was like His living and incorruptible chariot, or like the fertile ear of corn of the promised land, or like the rich merchant ship which brings the grain to the house of bread, in order that dying in the earth it might be multiplied for heaven. Their journey lasted five days, for on account of the pregnancy of his Spouse, Saint Joseph shortened each day's journey. Mary experienced no darkness of night on the way; for a few times, when their travel extended in to the night the holy Angels spread about their light. This light and vision of the Angels also Saint Joseph enjoyed. All of them together would form choirs, in which they and the two holy travelers alternated in singing wonderful hymns and canticles of praise, converting the fields into new heavens. During this whole journey the Queen was rejoiced by the sight of the Angels and by the sweet interior conversation held with them.

458. With these wonderful favors and delights, however, God arranged some hardships and inconveniences, which the Mary and Joseph encountered on the way. Because of Czar's command to register, on account of Josephs and

Mary's poverty and timid nature they were treated with less hospitality and consideration than others, especially the well-to-do; for the world judges and usually confers its favors according to outward appearance and according to personal influence. Our holy pilgrims were repeatedly had to listen to sharp reprimands in the taverns, at which they arrived tired out by their journey, and in some of them they were refused admittance as worthless and despicable people. Other times they were assigned some corner of the hallway; while at others She did not fare even so well, being obliged to rest with Her husband to places still more humble and unbecoming by worldly standards.

Jas 2:1 My brothers, show no partiality as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

2:2 For if a man with gold rings on his fingers and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and a poor person in shabby clothes also comes in,

2:3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Sit here, please," while you say to the poor one, "Stand there," or "Sit at my feet,"

2:4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil designs?

2:5 Listen, my beloved brothers. Did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him?

But in whatever places She rested, how miserable of a place it might be considered, the Angels of heaven

established their court around Joseph and Mary and Her unborn Son Jesus. Immediately they surrounded and enclosed them like an impenetrable wall, securing them against the terrors of the night. Her most faithful spouse Joseph, seeing Mary so well guarded by the Angels allowed himself to rest and sleep. She, however, continued Her celestial song and praise with the ten thousand Angels.

459.

460. The heavenly Lady observed and knew the secrets of the different souls of those She met, penetrating into the very thoughts and conditions of each, whether of grace or of guilt in their different degrees. *Concerning many souls She also knew whether they were predestined or reprobate*, whether they would persevere, fall, or again rise up. All this variety of insight moved Her to the exercise of heroic virtues as well in regard to the ones as to the others. For many of them She obtained the grace of perseverance, for others necessary help to rise from their sin to grace; for others again She prayed to the Lord with affectionate tears, feeling extreme sorrow for the reprobate, though She did not pray as powerfully for them. Many times, *worn out by these sorrows*, much more than by the hardships of travel, the strength of Her body gave way; on such occasions the holy Angels, carried Her up in their arms, in order that She might rest. The sick and afflicted whom She met on the way, She consoled and assisted by asking Her most holy Son to come to their aid in their necessities and adversities. She kept Herself silently apart from the many peoples,

preoccupied with the Fruit of Her divine pregnancy, which was already evident to all.

461. It happened also that once during these wintry days they reached a stopping-place in the midst of a cold rain and snow storm (for the Lord did not spare them this in convenience), and they were obliged to take shelter in the stables of the animals, because the owners would not furnish better accommodation. The animals showed them the courtesy and kindness which was refused by their human fellow-beings; for they retreated in reverence at the entrance. It is true the Queen of creation could command the winds, the frost and the snow not to inconvenience Her; but She would not give such a command *in order not to deprive Herself of suffering in imitation of Her most holy Son*, even before He came forth into the world. Therefore the bad weather affected Her to a certain extent. The faithful Saint Joseph, however, did his utmost to shield Her; and still more did the holy Angels seek to protect Her, especially the holy prince Michael, who remained at the right side of His Queen without leaving Her even for a moment. Several times, when She became tired, He led Her by the arm along the way. Whenever the Lord permitted, He also shielded Her against the weather and performed many other services for the heavenly Queen and the blessed Fruit of Her womb, Jesus.

462. Thus wonderfully assisted by the Angels, our travelers arrived at the town of Bethlehem at four o'clock of the fifth day, a Saturday. It was at the time of the winter solstice (Longest night of the year.), the

sun was already sinking and the night was falling.

Unfortunately Mary Agreda does not give a date, but rather describes the period of winter solstice.

They entered the town, and wandered through many streets in search of a lodging-house or inn for staying over night. They knocked at the doors of their acquaintances and nearer family relations; but were turned away and in many places they met with harsh words and insults. The most modest Mary followed Her spouse through the crowds of people, while he went from house to house and from door to door. Although She knew that the hearts and the houses of men were to be closed to them, and at the same time expose her pregnancy to the public gaze, this was more painful to Her modesty than their failure to obtain lodging. She nevertheless wished to obey Saint Joseph and suffer this indignity and unmerited shame. While wandering through the streets they passed the office of the public registry and they inscribed their names and paid the fee in order to comply with the Czar's edict. They continued their search, going to other houses. But having already applied at more than fifty different places, they found themselves rejected and sent away from them all. The heavenly spirits were filled with astonishment at these exalted mysteries of the Most High, which showed the patience and meekness of his Virgin Mother and the unfeeling hardness of men. At the same time they blessed the Almighty in His works, since

from that day on He began to exalt and honor poverty and humility among men. 463. It was nine o'clock at night when the most faithful Joseph, full of bitter and heartrending sorrow, returned to his most prudent Spouse and said: "My sweetest Lady, my heart is broken with sorrow at the thought of not only not being able to shelter You as You deserve and as I desire, but in not being able to offer You even any kind of protection from the weather, or a place of rest, a thing rarely or never denied to the most poor and despised in the world. No doubt heaven, in thus allowing the hearts of men to be so unmoved as to refuse us a night-lodging, conceals some mystery. I now remember, *Lady that outside the city walls there is a cave, which serves as a shelter for shepherds and their flocks.* Let us seek it out; perhaps it is unoccupied, and we may there expect some assistance from heaven, since we receive none from men on earth." The most prudent Virgin answered: "My spouse and My master, let not your kindest heart be afflicted because the ardent wishes which the love of Our Lord excites in You cannot be fulfilled. Since I bear Him in My womb, let us, I ask you, give thanks for having the events happen this way. The place of which you speak shall be most satisfactory to Me. Let Your tears of sorrow be turned into tears of joy, and let us lovingly embrace poverty, which is the inestimable and precious treasure of My most holy Son. He came from heaven in order to seek it, let us then afford Him an occasion to practice it in the joy of our souls; certainly I cannot be better delighted than

to see you obtain it for me. Let us go gladly wherever the Lord shall guide us.” The holy Angels accompanied the heavenly pair, brilliantly lighting up the way, and when they arrived at the city gate they saw that the cave was forsaken and unoccupied. Full of heavenly consolation, they thanked the Lord for this favor, and then happened what I shall relate in the following chapter.

Mary's instruction to Mary Of Agreda

464. My dearest daughter, if you are of a meek and humble heart, these mysteries which you have written about and have understood, will stir within you sweet sentiments of love and affection toward the Author of such great wonders. I wish that, bearing them in mind, you from this day on embrace with a new and great desire to neglect worldly things. In exchange for this forgetfulness and scorn of the world, God will look upon you with eyes of sweetest love. What can the world give you, even when it elevates you and exalts you most? And what do you lose, if you despise it? Is it not all a fleeting and momentary shadow, which escapes the grasp of those that hurry after it? Hence, if you had all worldly advantage in your possession, what great feat would it be to despise it as having no value? Consider it little in rejecting the world for the love of God. And if the world does not ignore you as much as you would like, then on your own behalf despise it, in order to remain free to enjoy the highest Good.

465. My most holy Son is such a faithful Lover of souls that He has set Me as the

teacher and living example of the love of humility and true contempt of worldly vanity and pride. He planned also for His own glory as well as for My sake that I, His Servant and Mother, should be left without shelter and be turned away by mortals in order that afterwards faithful souls be so much the more ready to offer Him a welcome. He also sought destitution and poverty, not because He had any need of them for bringing the practice of virtues to the highest perfection, but in order to teach mortals the shortest and surest way for reaching the heights of divine love and union with God,

466. You know well, my dearest, that you have been instructed by divine enlightenment to forget the visible and to raise yourself to the imitation of Me, copying in yourself, according to your abilities, the works and virtues shown to you in My life. This is the very first purpose of the knowledge which you receive in writing this history; for you have in Me a perfect model, and by it you can arrange your conversations and conduct in the same manner as I arranged mine in imitation of My sweetest Son. The dread with which this command to imitate Me has inspired you as a being above your strength, you must encourage yourself by the words of My most holy Son in the Gospel of saint Matthew:

Mt 5:46 For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same?

5:47 And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same?

5:48 *So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

This command of the Most High imposed upon His holy Church is not impossible of fulfillment, and, if His faithful children on their part dispose themselves properly, He will deny to none of them the grace of attaining this. All this My most holy Son has merited for them. But the degrading forgetfulness and neglect of men hinder them from maturing within themselves the fruits of His Redemption.

467. Of you particularly I expect this perfection, and I invite you to it by the sweet law of love which accompanies My instruction. Ponder and scrutinize, by the divine light, the obligation under which I place you. Let no difficulty or hardship disrupt you, nor stop you from any virtuous exercise, no matter how hard it may be. Nor be content with striving after the love of God and salvation of yourself alone; if you would be perfect in imitating Me and fulfilling all that the Gospel teaches, you must work for the salvation of men's souls and the exaltation of the holy Name of My Son, making Yourself an instrument in His powerful hands or the accomplishment of mighty works to advance His pleasure and glory.