

THE FEAST OF OUR LORD'S NATIVITY

“LET US NOW GO TO BETHLEHEM”

Some five miles south of Jerusalem, a small, unassuming town sits nestled among the rugged Judean hill. Its residents live in poverty today, as they have for centuries. Ordinarily, history would barely give such a place a passing glance, but this is no ordinary city of which we speak. This is BETHLEHEM, the site chosen by God to manifest Himself to the world in the Divine Person of Jesus Christ.

The word “Bethlehem” literally means “house of bread.” Numerous references to this city are found in both the Old and New Testaments. It was the home of Ruth and the setting of the tender story of love and devotion related in the Book of Ruth. King David spent his youth in the hills around Bethlehem, and was anointed here by Samuel to be the King of Israel. The tomb of Rachel, Jacob’s wife, who died giving birth to Benjamin, is located just north of Bethlehem. Bethlehem was also one of the strongholds fortified by Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, to guard the approaches to the city of Jerusalem.

All of these things, however, are greatly overshadowed by Bethlehem being the birthplace of Christ. Christians of all generations know every detail of the “Christmas Story” as related in the Gospel accounts of St. Matthew and St. Luke. The image of an exhausted Mary and Joseph, finally finding lodging in a stable on the outskirts of Bethlehem after their long journey from Jerusalem will forever be imbedded in the hearts and minds of all faithful believers. It was here, amidst the animals and in the stillness of the night that our Saviour was born!