

ST. JOSEPH PARISH AND SCHOOL – DECEMBER 20, 2020

Dear Parishioners and Parents,

How long a trip is it from Nazareth to Bethlehem? When the edict was presented in the town square of Nazareth that all men return to their place of ancestry for a census, how many days would it take for Mary, who was far advanced in pregnancy and Joseph to make this trip?

The first part of the journey would be from Nazareth to Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee. That is a 20 mile hike. The trip from Tiberias south down the Jordan River to Jericho is 64 miles. The journey from Jericho to Jerusalem is a steady incline of 16 miles. Finally you walk from Jerusalem to Bethlehem another 5 miles. That is hiking and walking over 100 miles nine months pregnant.

As you read this bulletin on Saturday or Sunday, Mary and Joseph have been trekking at least 5 days. In the times of those days, they likely provisioned themselves with bread and dried fish from the sea ports of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River.

On Tuesday I tried to take this journey imaginatively with the kindergarten children through 2nd grade. They are preparing for Christmas. Joseph and Mary were preparing to register for the census and the birth of a child. This lengthy trip by foot would certainly not be the best time of year. Their provisions are hardly today's food for a pregnancy.

As we prepare for Christmas, follow this day by day travel to reach Bethlehem. Once in Bethlehem, all the lodging was taken and they moved to the outskirts to a cave setting used by shepherds and sheep as shelter.

This early travel and this very setting of the birth of Jesus was a cogent sign that Jesus would be speaking to the poor and the fainthearted. No palace for Jesus – but simply a shelter used by shepherds. As you make your final preparations for the Christmas season, think of where Mary and Joseph are on this journey. There are still 4 or 5 more days to go.

Care and Concern During this Epidemic Season.

St. Joseph will have eight Masses from Thursday, December 24th to the Feast of the Holy Family on December 27th. **If you are not feeling well, please stay home.** If you come to church keep the appropriate distance and wear a mask if at all possible. There will be one-time use masks at the back of church.

Most people have signed up for a Mass or two during these 3 ½ days. On my part, I will be in the rear of the church by the Baptismal Font giving Communion for those who fear to stay but want to receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist. For this Eucharist before the Mass, I follow the approved hospital ritual that priests use moving from one room to another.

This Sunday at 7:00 PM we will have a Communal Penance Service. Based on previous experience 100 will attend. There should be ample room for people to stay separated unless they come from a family that is living together.

Thank you for your participation in the Sacraments.

Fr. Tom Acker, S.J.
December 20, 2020