

THE CHURCH OF ST.MARY'S

ELIZABETH, ILLINOIS

# THE NATIVITY PLAY

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SCRIPT

**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE**

**SYNOPSIS:** THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE IS THE BASIS FOR THE ACCOUNTING OF THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO AND CULMINATING IN THE BIRTH OF THE INFANT JESUS IN A MANGER IN BETHLEHEM. THE NARRATOR PROVIDES THE MOTIVATION FOR ST. LUKE'S ACCOUNTING AND BACKGROUND FOR THE PLOT. ALL SPEAKING ACTORS PERFORM THE GOSPEL STORIES ORATORIO-STYLE FROM THE LECTERN. THE YOUNGER CHILDREN ARE SILENT, COSTUMED ACTORS CREATING A LIVE NATIVITY SCENE AT THE CONCLUSION.

**REFERENCES** ARE TAKEN FROM THE TEXT AND ANNOTATIONS OF:

**THE NEW AMERICAN BIBLE**, CATHOLIC BOOK PUBLISHING, NEW YORK, THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE PROLOGUE, CHAPTER 1-SELECTIONS, CHAPTER 2-LINES 1-20.

ALL ARE WELCOME TO USE THIS SCRIPT WITHOUT RESTRICTION.

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**CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE** (ALL ARE OLDER STUDENT SPEAKING PARTS READ FROM THE SCRIPT AT THE PODIUM) :

NARRATOR

ST. LUKE

ZECHARIAH

ANGEL GABRIEL

MARY

ELIZABETH

**NATIVITY SET PLAYERS** (ALL ARE YOUNGER CHILDREN, NON SPEAKING, ACTING PARTS) :

MARY

JOSEPH

ANGELS (PREFER 2-4)

SHEPHERDS (PREFER 2)

OPTIONAL ANIMALS

**SET PROPS:** NATIVITY BACKDROP WITH RUSTIC MANGER, INFANT DOLL WRAPPED IN SWADDLING BLANKET, SHEPHERDS' LANTERNS & CROOKS, ANGELS WITH CANDLES, OPTIONAL PROP ANIMALS IF NOT USING COSTUMED ACTORS

## THE NATIVITY PLAY BASED UPON THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE

(THE PLAY IS READ AND ENACTED IN ONE ACT. OPENING IS STAGED WITH THE NARRATOR AT THE LECTERN, ADDITIONAL SPEAKERS ARE SEATED AT THE BENCH NEXT TO THE LECTERN. ALL SPEAKING ACTORS ARE IN DRESS CLOTHES.)

**NARRATOR:** GOOD EVENING AND MERRY CHRISTMAS.

THE STUDENTS OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASS AT ST. MARY'S HAVE THE PRIVILEGE TONIGHT TO READ TO YOU THE **PROLOGUE TO THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE** AND ENACT **THE INFANCY NARRATIVE OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS**. THE YOUNGER CHILDREN FROM OUR PARISH WILL ACT OUT THE ARRIVAL OF THE INFANT JESUS. WE THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR ATTENTION.

(PAUSE)

**THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE'S** IS UNIQUE IN THAT IT IS THE ONLY ONE OF THE GOSPELS TO BEGIN WITH A LITERARY PROLOGUE. THE GOSPEL AUTHOR WRITES HIS PROLOGUE TO YOU, THE READER, CALLING YOU "EXCELLENT THEOPHILUS"—MEANING "FRIEND OF GOD."

PLEASE ALLOW OUR CLASS TO BEGIN WITH THE AUTHOR'S **PROLOGUE** AND THEN CONTINUE WITH STORIES:

- THE STORY OF THE UNEXXPECTED PREGNANCY BESTOWED THROUGH PRAYER- THE CONCEPTION OF THE FUTURE JOHN THE PROPHET, TO ZECHARIAH AND ELIZABETH, WHO WAS MARY'S COUSIN-
- THE STORY OF THE APPEARANCE OF THE ARCHANGEL GABRIEL TO THE VIRGIN MARY,
- THE STORY OF THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MARY'S CONCEPTION
- THE STORY OF MARY'S VISIT WITH ELIZABETH, THEN PREGNANT WITH THE FUTURE ST. JOHN
- THE STORY OF THE GREAT CENSUS CALLING JOSEPH AND MARY FROM NAZARETH TO THE CITY OF DAVID, CALLED "BETHLEHEM"
- AND FINALLY, THE STORY OF THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD JESUS IN A MANGER

WE BEGIN THE GOSPEL WITH THE WORDS OF ITS AUTHOR, ST. LUKE.

**(NARRATOR STEPS BACK, MAKING WAY FOR ST. LUKE AT THE LECTERN.)**

**ST. LUKE:** THE FOLLOWING IS TAKEN FROM THE PROLOGUE TO THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE:

"SINCE MANY HAVE UNDERTAKEN TO COMPILE A NARRATIVE OF THE EVENTS THAT HAVE BEEN FULFILLED AMONG US, JUST AS THOSE WHO WERE EYEWITNESSES FROM THE BEGINNING AND MINISTERS OF THE WORD HAVE HANDED THEM DOWN TO US, I TOO HAVE DECIDED, AFTER INVESTIGATING EVERYTHING ACCURATELY ANEW, TO WRITE IT DOWN IN AN ORDERLY SEQUENCE FOR YOU, MOST EXCELLENT THEOPHILUS, SO THAT YOU MAY REALIZE THE CERTAINTY OF THE TEACHINGS YOU HAVE RECEIVED."

WITH THESE INTENTIONS, LET US BEGIN "THE INFANCY NARRATIVE."

**(ST. LUKE SITS DOWN. NARRATOR RETURNS TO LECTERN.)**

**NARRATOR:** IN THE DAYS OF HEROD, KING OF JUDEA, THERE WAS A PRIEST NAMED "ZECHARIAH" OF THE PRIESTLY DIVISION OF ABIJAH; HIS WIFE WAS FROM THE DAUGHTERS OF AARON, AND HER NAME WAS "ELIZABETH." BOTH WERE RIGHTEOUS IN THE EYES OF GOD, OBSERVING ALL THE COMMANDMENTS AND ORDINANCES OF THE LORD BLAMELESSLY. BUT THEY HAD NO CHILD, BECAUSE ELIZABETH WAS BARREN AND BOTH WERE ADVANCED IN THEIR YEARS.

**(ZECHARIAH AND ANGEL RISE AND STAND SILENTLY BEHIND NARRATOR AT PODIUM)**

ONCE, WHEN HE WAS SERVING AS PRIEST IN HIS DIVISION'S TURN BEFORE GOD, ACCORDING TO THE PRACTICE OF THE PRIESTLY SERVICE, HE WAS CHOSEN BY LOT TO ENTER THE SANCTUARY OF THE LORD TO BURN THE INCENSE. THEN, WHILE THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY OF THE PEOPLE WAS PRAYING OUTSIDE AT THE HOUR OF THE INCENSE BURNING, THE ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED TO HIM. ZECHARIAH WAS TROUBLED BY WHAT HE SAW AND FEAR CAME UPON HIM.

BUT THE ANGEL SAID TO HIM..

**(ANGEL AND ZECHARIAH POSITION TOGETHER AT THE PODIUM AND READ FROM THE SAME SCRIPT. NARRATOR STEPS AWAY FROM LECTERN.)**

**ANGEL:** DO NOT BE AFRAID, ZECHARIAH, BECAUSE YOUR PRAYER HAS BEEN HEARD. YOUR WIFE ELIZABETH WILL BEAR YOU A SON AND YOU SHALL NAME HIM "JOHN." AND YOU WILL HAVE JOY AND GLADNESS AND MANY WILL REJOICE AT HIS BIRTH FOR HE WILL BE GREAT IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD. HE WILL DRINK NEITHER WINE NOR STRONG DRINK.

HE WILL BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT,,, EVEN FROM HIS MOTHER'S WOMB,,, AND HE WILL TURN MANY OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL TO THE LORD THEIR GOD.

HE WILL GO BEFORE HIM IN THE SPIRIT AND POWER OF ELIJAH,,, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS TOWARD CHILDREN,,, AND THE DISOBEDIENT TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE RIGHTEOUS,,, TO PREPARE A PEOPLE FIT FOR THE LORD."

**ZECHARIAH (CONFUSED):** HOW SHALL I KNOW THIS? FOR I AM AN OLD MAN AND MY WIFE IS ADVANCED IN YEARS."

**ANGEL (SLIGHTLY IRRITATED, SPEAKS COMMANDINGLY):** I AM "GABRIEL", WHO STAND BEFORE GOD. I WAS SENT TO SPEAK TO YOU AND TO ANNOUNCE TO YOU THIS GOOD NEWS. **BUT NOW YOU WILL BE SPEECHLESS AND UNABLE TO TALK UNTIL THE DAY THAT THESE THINGS TAKE PLACE,** BECAUSE YOU DID NOT BELIEVE MY WORDS, WHICH WILL BE FULFILLED IN THEIR PROPER TIME.

**(BOTH SIT DOWN, NARRATOR RETURNS TO LECTERN.)**

**NARRATOR:** MEANWHILE THE PEOPLE WERE WAITING FOR ZECHARIAH AND WERE AMAZED HE STAYED SO LONG IN THE SANCTUARY. **BUT WHEN HE CAME OUT, HE WAS INDEED UNABLE TO SPEAK TO THEM, AND THEY REALIZED THAT HE HAD A VISION IN THE SANCTUARY.** HE GESTURED TO THEM BUT REMAINED MUTE.

THEN, WHEN HIS DAYS OF MINISTRY WERE COMPLETED, HE WENT HOME. AFTER THIS TIME, HIS WIFE ELIZABETH CONCEIVED. AND SHE WENT INTO SECLUSION FOR FIVE MONTHS, SAYING, "SO HAS THE LORD DONE FOR ME AT A TIME WHEN HE HAS SEEN FIT TO TAKE AWAY MY DISGRACE BEFORE OTHERS."

**(NARRATOR PAUSES. NARRATOR POINT OF VIEW SHIFTS AS HE BEGINS THE FORESHADOWING OF MARY'S CONCEPTION. SPEAK THE LAST LINES VERY CLEARLY.)**

IN THE SIXTH MONTH, THE ANGEL GABRIEL WAS SENT FROM GOD,,, TO A TOWN OF GALILEE CALLED "NAZARETH" ,,,TO A VIRGIN WHO WAS BETROTHED TO A MAN NAMED "JOSEPH",,,WHO WAS OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID,,,AND THE VIRGIN'S NAME WAS "MARY."

**(MARY AND GABRIEL TO GO TO THE LECTERN, READ FROM SAME SCRIPT, STANDING SIDE BY SIDE. NARRATOR STEPS AWAY.)**

**(STAGE NOTE: ANGEL MUST SPEAK CLEARLY AND SLOWLY THESE OPENING LINES ARE CRITICAL. MARY MUST INDEED BE SHOCKED, THEN HUMBLE AND DEVOUT, IN HER DELIVERY.)**

**ANGEL:** HAIL, FAVORED ONE! THE LORD IS WITH YOU...

DO NOT BE AFRAID, MARY, FOR YOU HAVE FOUND FAVOR WITH GOD...

BEHOLD,,, YOU WILL CONCEIVE IN YOUR WOMB AND BEAR A SON,,, AND YOU SHALL CALL HIM "JESUS",,,, HE WILL BE GREAT,,, AND WILL BE CALLED "SON OF THE MOST HIGH" ,,,,AND THE LORD GOD WILL GIVE HIM THE THRONE OF DAVID,,,HIS FATHER,,, AND HE WILL RULE OVER THE HOUSE OF JACOB FOREVER...

AND OF HIS KINGDOM, THERE WILL BE NO END.

**MARY:** HOW CAN THIS BE, SINCE I HAVE HAD NO RELATIONS WITH A MAN?

**ANGEL:** THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL COME UPON YOU, AND THE POWER OF THE MOST HIGH WILL OVERSHADOW YOU.

THEREFORE, THE CHILD TO BE BORN WILL BE CALLED "HOLY", THE SON OF GOD.

AND BEHOLD, ELIZABETH YOUR RELATIVE, HAS ALSO CONCEIVED A SON IN HER OLD AGE,,, AND THIS IS THE SIXTH MONTH FOR HER WHO WAS CALLED BARREN,,, FOR NOTHING WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD.

**MARY:** BEHOLD,,, I AM THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD. MAY IT BE DONE TO ME ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD. (STEPS BACK FROM PODIUM, HEAD BOWED.)

(NARRATOR RETURNS TO THE PODIUM, ANGEL SITS DOWN. MARY STAYS STANDING BEHIND ELIZABETH, READY TO RETURN TO PODIUM AFTER NARRATOR LINES DELIVERED.)

**NARRATOR:** 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.

(NARRATOR STEPS AWAY FROM PODIUM, ELIZABETH JOINS MARY AT THE LECTERN. BOTH STAND TOGETHER AT LECTERN, READING FROM THE SAME SCRIPT )

(STAGE NOTE: ELIZABETH POINT OF VIEW IS SURPRISED AND ELATED. SHE'S ALREADY FIGURED OUT GOD'S SPECIAL BLESSINGS UPON BOTH OF THEM—HER SON TO BE JOHN THE PROPHET FOR MARY'S SON, JESUS THE MESSIAH.)

**ELIZABETH:** MOST BLESSED ARE YOU AMONG WOMEN, AND BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF YOUR WOMB.

AND HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN TO ME THAT THE MOTHER OF MY LORD SHOULD COME TO ME? FOR AT THE MOMENT THE SOUND OF YOUR GREETING REACHED MY EARS, THE INFANT IN MY WOMB LEAPED FOR JOY! BLESSED ARE YOU WHO BELIEVED THAT WHAT WAS SPOKEN TO YOU BY THE LORD WOULD BE FULFILLED!

**MARY:** MY SOUL PROCLAIMS THE GREATNESS OF THE LORD, MY SPIRIT REJOICES IN GOD, MY SAVIOR, FOR HE HAS LOOKED UPON HIS HANDMAID'S LOWLINESS.

BEHOLD,,, FROM NOW ON WILL ALL AGES CALL ME "BLESSED."

THE MIGHTY ONE HAS DONE GREAT THINGS FOR ME AND HOLY IS HIS NAME.

HIS MERCY IS FROM AGE TO AGE TO THOSE WHO FEAR HIM. HE HAS SHOWN MIGHT WITH HIS ARM, DISPERSED THE ARROGANT OF MIND AND HEART.

HE HAS THROWN DOWN THE RULERS FROM THEIR THRONES BUT LIFTED UP THE LOWLY. THE HUNGRY HE HAS FILLED WITH GOOD THINGS, THE RICH HE HAS SENT AWAY EMPTY.

HE HAS HELPED ISRAEL, HIS SERVANT, REMEMBERING HIS MERCY, ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE TO OUR FATHERS, TO ABRAHAM, AND TO HIS DESCENDANTS FOREVER.

(MARY AND ELIZABETH BOW THEIR HEADS, THEN LEAVE LECTERN, SIT DOWN AND ST. LUKE AND THE ANGEL RETURN TO THE LECTERN. ST. LUKE WILL NARRATE THE REST OF THE GOSPEL.)

**ST. LUKE:** MARY REMAINED WITH ELIZABETH FOR ABOUT THREE MONTHS AND THEN RETURNED HOME.

(STAGE NOTES: ST. LUKE-PAUSE TO CHANGE PACE FOR THE CLASSIC, SLOW INTRODUCTION TO THE STORY OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS. ST. LUKE MUST VISUALLY CHECK WITH STAGE MANAGERS THAT THE YOUNGER CHILDREN ARE READY AT THE BACK OF THE CHURCH.

THE STAGE MANAGERS WILL SEND UP THE CHILDREN TO WALK IN PAIRS FROM THE BACK OF THE CHURCH, DOWN THE CENTER AISLE, SLOWLY AND SILENTLY TO THEIR ASSIGNED PLACES AT THE MANGER STAGING AREA.

AT THE MANGER, MARY WILL PLACE THE INFANT IN THE MANGER (CRADLE) THEN MARY AND JOSEPH BOTH KNEEL AT EACH END. ARRIVING ANGELS WILL POSITION THEMSELVES STANDING TO THE SIDE AND REAR OF JOSEPH. SHEPHERDS ARRIVE AND SIT BELOW MARY AND JOSEPH LEVEL, TO THE SIDE OF MARY. SHEPHERDS KNEEL ON ONE KNEE WITH CROOK UPRIGHT. ACTOR-ANIMALS SHOULD POSITION SITTING BELOW AND TO THE SIDES OF MARY AND JOSEPH.

MARY AND JOSEPH KNEEL WITH HANDS FOLDED ON EACH SIDE OF THE CRIB. ANGELS STAND ON THE JOSEPH SIDE, SHEPHERDS KNEEL ON ONE KNEE WITH CROOKS UPRIGHT ON MARY'S SIDE. ANIMALS SIT BELOW THE MANGER SCENE IN FOREGROUND.

TOGETHER THEY CREATE A STAGED LIVING NATIVITY SCENE BY THE END OF THE GOSPEL STORY.)

**ST. LUKE:** IN THOSE DAYS A DECREE WENT OUT FROM CAESAR AUGUSTUS THAT THE WHOLE WORLD SHOULD BE ENROLLED.

THIS WAS THE FIRST ENROLLMENT,,, WHEN QUIRINIUS WAS THE GOVERNOR OF SYRIA.

SO ALL WENT TO BE ENROLLED,,, EACH TO HIS OWN TOWN. AND JOSEPH, TOO, WENT UP FROM GALILEE FROM THE TOWN OF NAZARETH,,, TO JUDEA, TO THE CITY OF DAVID THAT IS CALLED "BETHLEHEM",,, BECAUSE HE WAS OF THE HOUSE AND FAMILY OF DAVID,,, TO BE ENROLLED WITH MARY, HIS BETROTHED, WHO WAS WITH CHILD.

(MARY AND JOSEPH BEGIN WALK TOGETHER FROM THE REAR OF CHURCH DOWN THE CENTER AISLE. DONKEY-ACTOR MAY WALK BEHIND MARY AND JOSEPH.)

WHILE THEY WERE THERE, THE TIME CAME FOR HER TO HAVE HER FIRSTBORN SON. SHE WRAPPED HIM IN SWADDLING CLOTHES AND LAID HIM IN A MANGER, BECAUSE THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR THEM IN THE INN.



**(ALLOW TIME FOR MARY AND JOSEPH TO WALK TO THEIR PLACES.)**

NOW THERE WERE SHEPHERDS IN THAT REGION, LIVING IN THE FIELDS AND KEEPING WATCH OVER THEIR FLOCK. THE ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED TO THEM AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD SHONE AROUND THEM, AND THEY WERE STRUCK WITH GREAT FEAR.

**(ANGELS BEGIN THEIR WALK TO POSITIONS. ONCE THEY ARE WALKING, THE SPEAKING ANGEL AT THE LECTERN SPEAKS THEIR PART.)**

**ANGEL:** DO NOT BE AFRAID FOR BEHOLD,,, I PROCLAIM TO YOU GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY THAT WILL BE FOR ALL THE PEOPLE.

FOR TODAY, IN THE CITY OF DAVID A SAVIOR HAS BEEN BORN FOR YOU WHO IS MESSIAH AND LORD. AND THIS WILL BE A SIGN FOR YOU: YOU WILL FIND AN INFANT, WRAPPED IN SWADDLING CLOTHES AND LYING IN A MANGER."

**ST. LUKE:** AND SUDDENLY, THERE WAS A MULTITUDE OF THE HEAVENLY HOST WITH THE ANGEL, PRAISING GOD AND SAYING,

**ANGEL: (SLOWLY, DELIBERATELY)** "GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST,,, AND ON EARTH,,, PEACE TO THOSE ON WHOM HIS FAVOR RESTS."

**(SPEAKING ANGEL SITS DOWN.)**

**(SHEPHERDS BEGIN THEIR WALK DOWN THE AISLE, CONTINUING TO THEIR ASSIGNED PLACES. WHEN THE SHEPHERDS ARE HALF WAY UP THE AISLE, ST. LUKE MAY BEGIN HIS FINAL LINES, DELIVERED SLOWLY.)**

**ST. LUKE:** WHEN THE ANGELS WENT AWAY FROM THEM TO HEAVEN, THE SHEPHERDS WENT IN HASTE AND FOUND MARY AND JOSEPH AND THE INFANT LYING IN THE MANGER. WHEN THEY SAW THIS,,, THEY MADE KNOWN THE MESSAGE THAT HAD BEEN TOLD THEM ABOUT THIS CHILD. ALL WHO HEARD IT WERE AMAZED BY WHAT HAD BEEN TOLD THEM BY THE SHEPHERDS. AND MARY KEPT ALL THESE THINGS, REFLECTING ON THEM IN HER HEART.

**(STAGE NOTE: ST. LUKE SHOULD TAKE A LONG PAUSE TO ALLOW THE CONGREGATION TO VIEW THE LIVING NATIVITY, THEN DELIVER THE FINAL LINES THROUGH CONCLUSION.)**

THEN THE SHEPHERDS RETURNED, GLORIFYING AND PRAISING GOD FOR ALL THEY HAD HEARD AND SEEN, JUST AS IT HAD BEEN TOLD TO THEM.

**PRIEST (UNLESS OTHERWISE AGREED FOR ST. LUKE): THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD.**

**ALL: THANKS BE TO GOD.**

(THIS SIGNALS THE END OF THE GOSPEL AND THE END OF THE NATIVITY PLAY. STAGE MANAGERS DIRECT THE CHILDREN TO RESERVED SEATING OFF THE STAGE AREA SO MASS SERVICES CAN CONTINUE.

**THE LIVING NATIVITY SILENT ACTORS** MAY RETURN TO THE MANGER SCENE AT THE INVITATION OF THE PRIEST, AFTER MASS IS CONCLUDED, FOR A CONGREGATION FINAL DISMISSAL SONG WHILE AGAIN VIEWING THE LIVING NATIVITY. 2011- THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY'S HAS SELECTED, "ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT" FOR THE MUSIC. THE CHILDREN STAY IN NATIVITY SET POSITION UNTIL THE CONGREGATION IS DISMISSED.)