

# THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

*Ignatian Meditation Guides* by Bill Gaultiere

## Introduction to Ignatian Meditation

In Ignatius' 16th century approach to Scripture instead of analyzing a text, you use your senses to imagine yourself as a character in the story. Then you have a short, personal conversation with the Lord. Each reading is guided by a focus question below. In a group context follow the leader's instructions on what to share and be sure to protect people's confidentiality.

## Background to the Text

This Gospel reading in *The Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius is in Week Two which focuses on following Jesus Christ. Like any young mother, Mary wants to have her baby in the comforts of her home with her own mother and family there to care for her. But Caesar's census forces her and Joseph to travel on a donkey for 80 miles on a bumpy road! Thankfully, she has Joseph to care for her and protect her and they make it to Bethlehem, the city of David, his ancestor. The guest rooms in all the homes are filled, but a family (traditionally considered an innkeeper) provides shelter for Mary to have her baby in their stable. So the newborn King is laid in a feeding trough, surrounded by animals! In this way the Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled that the Messiah would be born in the little town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

## Ask For the Grace

Lord Jesus, I desire the grace to know you more intimately, to love you more intensely, and to follow you more closely.

## Imagine Scripture: Luke 2

1-5 About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

6-7 While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel (MSG).

## Prayer / Journaling / Soul Talk Prompts

1. Visualize yourself in the Gospel. Don't seek intellectual insights—stay with the imagery. Use your senses to see, touch, feel, and hear. What part of the story are you drawn to? Which character do you identify with or are you a bystander?
2. Experience the story in the role of the character God led you to. Then talk with the Lord. What do you feel? How does this relate to something in your life today? What is God saying to you?