

Kids' Chronicle

An angel visits Joseph

BY JOE SARNICOLA

Joseph the carpenter was in his workshop, skillfully building a table for use by one of the town's wealthy leaders. Joseph planned to save the money from the finished table, because he was going to be married soon, and there would be many new expenses.

Suddenly, Joseph became very tired, even though it was only a few hours into the afternoon. No matter how hard he tried, he could not stay awake, and he fell asleep. Then he heard someone call his name.

"Joseph, Joseph!" the voice said.

"Who's there?" he answered.

"I am an angel of the most high God. I bring words from the Lord to you."

"Speak to me," Joseph responded. "I am listening."

"Mary is soon to be your bride, but God has special plans for her," the angel

said. "She will bear a son through the power of the Holy Spirit."

"A son?" Joseph exclaimed. "What should I do so that Mary will not be shamed by bearing a child that is not mine?"

"There is nothing to be ashamed of," the angel replied. "This child will save his people from their sins, and you will call him Jesus. Only then will the words of Isaiah, the prophet, be fulfilled when he said, 'The virgin will give birth to a son, and his name will be Emmanuel, which means God is with us.'"

"I will raise the boy as if he were my own," Joseph promised. "Yet he is greater than that, for he is the Son of God."

Joseph awoke from his dream and it was still daylight. He had been asleep only a few minutes, but he knew he had seen



Illustration by Linda Jeanne Rivers

an angel, and he knew what the angel had said was true. Joseph left his shop, putting the work on the table aside, and went to find Mary.

Mary was praying when Joseph found her in her room.

"I have seen a miracle," Joseph said.

"So have I," Mary replied.

Everything the angel told Joseph came to pass, and when the boy was born, Joseph remembered the name the angel had given him and the child was named Jesus.

As if to confirm that no ordinary child had just been born into the world, three astrologers from the East brought gifts for the newborn Jesus.

"How did you know our son was born?" Joseph asked.

"We saw a star that told us the king of the Jews had been born, and we followed it here," they said.

Then the astrologers bowed before Jesus and offered him their gold, frankincense and myrrh.

READ MORE ABOUT IT: Matthew 1

Q&A

1. Who told Joseph about Jesus?
2. What did the astrologers bring Jesus?

Bible Accent

For many years, the Gospel According to Matthew was believed to be the first account of the life of Jesus to be written. Although that is no longer the consensus of opinion, Matthew is still one of the most frequently referred to books of the New Testament.

The first chapter of the book establishes the historical lineage of Jesus, and continues with a beautiful telling of the story of the events leading up to the birth of Christ.

Many of the most important stories and parables of our faith can be found in Matthew, including those about the ministry of John the Baptist, the temptation of Jesus, the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, the calling of the Twelve Disciples and the passion narrative. Matthew ends his book with a powerful promise made by Jesus: "I am with you always, until the end of the age."

St. Francis Xavier

St. Francis Xavier was born in Spain in 1506. He attended the University of Paris and the College of St. Barbara. In 1540, he was one of the first men officially recognized by the pope as part of the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits.

As a travelling missionary St. Francis provided medical care to people who were sick, especially those in hospitals. When he ministered to people in the East Indies, he would set church teachings to the tunes of popular songs so that the words would be easier to learn. When he became aware of a need for Christian teaching in Japan, he planned a journey there, learned some of the language and converted many Japanese people to the Catholic faith.

St. Francis later tried to visit China, but he became sick and died before entering the country. We honor him on Dec. 3.



Kids' Club

You can win a \$50 savings bond by writing an essay (100 or fewer words) answering this question:

If Jesus had been born today and you were one of his first visitors, what gift would you bring and why?

Send your essay — including name, home address, telephone number, school and grade — to Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Deadline for entries is Dec. 17, 1998. The winner will be notified by phone and receive the savings bond by mail. In addition, the winner's essay will be published in an upcoming issue of *Kids' Chronicle*.

Last month's winner was Kate Gigliotti, a sixth-grade student at Greece's Mother of Sorrows School. In response to the question **King David prayed to God for guidance. What kinds of things do you pray to God for help or guidance with?** she wrote:

Like King David, I ask God for his help and guidance. I pray for peace and hope for our world, and I remember all the sick and lonely.

On some days I ask God to show me what I am doing wrong, and how I can make myself a better person. Always, I tell God my hopes, dreams and fears. I know he will give me love and support when I have none. Praying is like shutting out terror, hate and sin. To me, praying for God's help is like coming out of a dark closet into light. This is how I pray to God.

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Puzzle

How many names of Bible characters can you find in this phrase? Answers on page 8.

"YOU ARE TO NAME HIM JESUS."

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