

St. Gregory's Christmas Pageant Year B (2005)

PRELUDE

Prophet: First there was Abraham.

Children enter calling out names.

Actor 1: I am Abraham father of...

Actor 2: Isaac father of ...

Actor 3: Jacob father of...

Actors calling out one name at a time: Judah, Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, King David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joram, Uzziah, Jotha, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jechoniah. Shealtiel, Zerubbabel, Abiud, Eliakim, Azor, Zadok, Achim, Eliud, Eleazar, Matthan, and Jacob fathered

Line ends with Joseph and Mary coming out holding hands.

Joseph: Joseph the husband of,

Mary: Mary.

Prophet: So runs the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of Abraham.

SCENE I(a)

Narrator: And so begins Matthew's account of Jesus' miraculous birth. In the land of Israel lived a young woman named Mary who was betrothed to be married to a man named Joseph. But before they came to live together...

[angels watching, listening?]

Mary: Joseph, I need to speak to you. It's very important.

Joseph: Of course Mary, what is it?

Mary: I don't know how to tell you this, but... I...

Joseph: *(takes Mary's hand)* Mary, we will be husband and wife. Whatever it is you can tell me.

Mary: I can't explain it, but I am pregnant.

Joseph: How can this be? We are not yet married... and I... Are you sure?

Mary: Yes, Joseph. I am sure. I have been to the midwife.

Joseph: Mary if someone has taken advantage of you I won't be angry.

Mary: No one has taken advantage of me. And I promise you, Joseph, I have not betrayed you. I am still a virgin.

Joseph: You are a good woman, Mary, what you are telling me doesn't make any sense. I will do right by you, but you must be honest with me. If there is someone else, say so now.

Mary: Joseph, I am telling you this because I want to be honest with you. I know it doesn't make sense but I am telling you the truth. I can't explain it.

Joseph: I'm not a fool, Mary. Certainly someone has taken advantage. If you can't tell me the truth now, you'll make fools of us both.

Mary: Joseph, I am telling you the truth!

Joseph: I won't drag your name through the mud, but the child you carry is not mine. You give me no choice. I can't marry you.

Mary: Joseph, please. I want us to be together.

Joseph: Perhaps you could start a life as a widow in Jerusalem.

Mary: But...

Joseph: I'm sorry, Mary, but it must be this way.

Mary: Joseph, if that's your choice than I will do what I have to do.

Mary leaves [a few angels escort Mary off] . Joseph watches her leave and shakes his head. He lies down to go to sleep.

SCENE 1(b)

Narrator: Joseph lay down, full of sadness in his heart, for he still loved Mary. That night he dreamt the angel of the Lord appeared to him.

Angel chorus: Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid.

Head Angel: Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid.

Angel chorus: God is with you.

Head Angel: Joseph, take Mary home as your wife. Don't be afraid. She has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him...

Head Angel, Angel 2, and Angel chorus: Jesus!

Angel 2: Because he will save his people from their sins.

Joseph: The Holy Spirit? I don't understand.

Head Angel: Her son, your son, Joseph, is the Son of God. And he will be the savior of Israel.

Angel 2: And save the people from their sins.

Head Angel: The Lord asks a great service from the both of you. Go find your young bride, Joseph. Tell her what I have told you.

Narrator: Now all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

Prophet: Look! the virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'. *Angels disappear.*

PEOPLE SING "O come O come Emmanuel"

SCENE 1(c)

Narrator: Joseph woke up and ran to find Mary to do what the Lord had commanded.

Mary sits by the water washing clothes. Joseph walks to her.

Joseph: Mary!

Mary: Joseph? I didn't expect to ...

Joseph: An angel appeared to me and told me that the child you carry is from God... Now I know you did not betray me... I am sorry I didn't believe you... Mary, I love you and I still want you to be my wife.

Mary: Joseph, the path of God is never easy. I am already with child. I have faith in God's will and God's purpose for me. Can you have faith too?

Joseph: Mary, I trust God and I trust you. Will you still have me?

Mary: *(She nods)* Let's get married.

People jump up on stage. A priest lays crowns on their heads. There are poppers. A Chuppa is made by two people holding a cloth over Mary and Joseph. The cloth is draped on the president's chair to signify Mary and Joseph's house. Baby Jesus is in the crowd and is handed to Mary. Mary and Joseph sit in the president's chair.

Joseph: The angel who came to me said I should name the boy "Jesus."

Mary: Then Jesus he will be.

AS PEOPLE SING "Good Christians all rejoice!" *Mary and Joseph exit.*

SCENE II

Royal cloth over Mary and Joseph's cloth on president's chair to change scene from Mary and Joseph's house to Herod's court. The Star comes from chapel. Wisemen follow the star, gesticulating, pointing, looking at maps etc. Enter Herod, Archeleus, petitioners and advisors to Herod's court. Archeleus wears a propeller hat and is playing with a paddle and ball. Herod sits enthroned on president's chair as various people seek his attention to their cause.

Narrator: Mary and Joseph lived under the rule of King Herod, an unjust man, king by crown only.

Petitioner 1: King Herod, my liege, pray attend to this matter: My neighbor has dug a pit and left it uncovered. I am afraid one of my oxen may fall in and become stuck. Please tell my neighbor to cover his pit!

Herod expresses boredom/disdain/impatience.

Petitioner 2: King Herod, my liege, pray attend to this matter: My tailor has woven me a jacket mixing strands of wool and cotton in the same garment! Please advise if I should forgive him and ask for a new coat.

Herod expresses boredom/disdain/impatience.

Petitioner 3: King Herod, my liege, pray attend to this matter: my daughter wishes to marry a man who asks for a dowry

Petitioner 4: that would leave us to starve,

Petitioner 3: should I...

Herod expresses boredom/disdain/impatience.

Herod: Doesn't anyone have a matter of REAL CONCERN for me to attend to? I *AM* king, after all...

Noble Philosophers mime speaking to Advisor, pointing to star, gesturing at maps. Advisor motions for them to wait, and goes to Herod.

Advisor: Lord Herod, my liege, three noble philosophers dressed in fine silks and rich jewels have arrived from the East. I believe their question will interest you.

Herod: Finally, my court is full of men equal to my stature. *(To the Advisor)* Bring them in.

Philosophers enter and bow to king Herod.

Philosopher 1: Good King Herod...

King Herod nods

Philosopher 2: Wise King Herod...

King Herod nods

Philosopher 3: Fair King Herod, we have come to you, as ruler of this land. For a great star from the East guided us here to bring gifts to a great ruler.

King Herod Blushes

Herod: Noble philosophers, you speak too kindly. Surely I will meet with you.

Philosopher 1: Wise King Herod,

Philosopher 4: We bear gifts from our homeland – Gold. . . *(Shows the Gold)*

Philosopher 1: Frankincense. . . *(Shows the Frankincense)*

Philosopher 2: And Myrrh. *(Shows the Myrrh.)* To honor the infant King of the Jews for we have seen his star and followed it here.

Herod: Well, yes. Of course. The infant king. I knew that.
[Herod waves to his adviser.] Do you know anything about this infant King of the Jews? Am I not King of this Land and all the Jews that live in it? My throne has only one heir, my son Archelaus. And he is no infant, though he acts like one sometimes!

Archelaus: What?

Herod: *(to Archelaus)* Nothing. *(to advisor)* So why do they speak of this infant king?

Advisor: My Liege, Our prophets foretold the king these philosophers speak of. At Bethlehem in Judea a King of the Jews will be born, so say the prophet Micah. *Points to Prophet.*

Prophet: And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are by no means the least among the leaders of Judah, for from you will come a leader who will shepherd my people Israel.

Herod: But *I* am the King!

Advisor: Good King Herod. Do not concern yourself too much with the prophet's words. After all, when was the last time that you saw it raining frogs?

Herod: *[to the advisor. Stage whisper]* This is unacceptable and I won't stand for it! These men would tell me that I am not king in my own land!

[To the Wisemen] Such an important matter will take my full attention. Call together all of my chief priests and scribes. *(Herod walks over to Stage 2, chief priests and scribes follow him and gather in a circle around Herod There is a sign that reads "Conference room free." Herod turns it over and it reads "Conference Room in Use.")*

CP1: Of course you are king – how can you not be king?

CP2: But if the people suspect that there is a new king, they might not pay their taxes...

CP3: But there is no king! Just a baby!

CP4: And not the son of a king!

CP5: And born in Bethlehem? Who's born in Bethlehem? Are not all our great leaders and wisepeople born here in Jerusalem?

Prophet: And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are...

ALL CPs: WE KNOW!

Herod: The people put their faith in the prophets. We must deal with this matter directly. Urgently. Fine. So who will go to Bethlehem and retrieve this infant king?

CPs: Bethlehem?

CPs all make hemming and hawing gestures, pulling at their collars, looking at their feet, turning around and being distracted.

Archelaus: Why don't you send these so-called Philosophers to find the baby? Then they can tell you what king this is.

Herod: I KNOW! We will send these so-called Philosophers to find the baby. Then

THEY can tell ME what king this is. I'll send them now!

Herod and advisors return to throne room.

Herod: Esteemed colleagues. My priests and scribes have told me that this child is in the town of Bethlehem. I would go myself and do him homage, but you see I am so needed by my people. (*Pointing to petitioners*) I would be most honored if you would bring the child my blessings, and then return to me and tell me where he can be found, so that when I am free of my duties here, I will make a personal embassy to honor him.

Archelaus: Bethlehem's not far from here. Less than half a days journey. Why don't you stay the night, you can leave tomorrow.

Herod: Yes, stay so that we can hear more of this infant king.

Philosopher 3: You are quite generous king Herod, but we travel by night so that we can follow the star.

Herod: Before you go, would you mind telling me just how long you have been following this star?

Philosopher 2: We first saw the star about 8 months ago, and have been following it since.

Philosopher 1: Why do you ask?

Herod: (*rubbing his hands together, looking evil*) No reason.

Philosopher 1: We shall leave immediately!

Philosopher 2: And carry your blessings to him.

Philosopher 4: Thank you, King Herod.

Narrator: So they set out. And the star they had seen rising went forward and halted over the place where the child was in the town of Bethlehem.

PEOPLE SING: **"Brightest and best"**

SCENE II(b)

Scene change: Herod's court reverts to Mary and Joseph's house (remove Herod's cloth). Philosophers wander path of gospel procession following the star. Mary and Joseph sit in their house talking while as the philosophers slowly approach, not yet seeing them. There is a sign that says "Bethlehem pop. 35 36"

Philosopher 1: We've been traveling a while now, we should be close.

Philosopher 2: I hope Herod's scribes were right about Bethlehem.

Philosopher 3: Yeah, from what we've seen so far, this doesn't look like the kind of place where the new king of Israel would come from.

Joseph: This child of ours is beautiful, Mary, but as far as I can tell, he's a baby like any other- he eats, he poops, he cries, he sleeps. Is this how he will save our people?

Mary: Joseph, this is God's plan. We should remember that and have faith in it.

Joseph: But the angel said that Jesus would save our people-and look at him! He's so tiny and helpless- how can such a defenseless little baby be the one to save us?

Philosopher 2: You're right about this place being kind of a dump, but remember King David. He came from Bethlehem and he was a great King.

Philosopher 1: True. And Moses; he wasn't of high birth, and he led his people out of Egypt.

Joseph: Well Mary, I just wish I knew what was going to happen.

Mary: Joseph-remember the angel who visited you. We should have faith in his word.

Philosopher 4: Yeah, David, Moses, I see your point. Still this isn't what we expected. Could we have taken a wrong turn?

Philosopher 2: My friend, trust the star; it has been our faithful guide this whole long journey. Now is not the time to doubt.

Joseph: I think you are right Mary. We should take care of our baby, and leave it to God to take care of the Messiah.

Star comes to rest over Jesus Mary and Joseph.

Philosopher 1: Look!

All Philosophers: The Baby!

Philosophers drop to their knees. Mary and Joseph seem a little confused.

Philosopher 3: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, for you have shown us this day a savior. Your glory is revealed in this humble place, through the tender babe.

Mary: Welcome friends. Surely God has sent you to us.

Philosopher 2: We have been following this star on a long journey, and now at last we have found the infant king!

Joseph: The King? Oh, yes! God has sent you to help us. Can you tell us what we should do next?

Philosopher 1: We have traveled here on faith, and what we bring are gifts to honor the child.

Mary: We and God thank you for your generosity.

Narrator: And so the philosophers presented the infant king with their gifts and paid him homage.

PEOPLE SING: **“We three kings”**

As people sing, philosophers in turn bring their gifts to the feet of Mary and Joseph, bowing in supplication to Jesus whom they recognize as the Messiah.

Mary: Kind philosophers. It is still dark, there is not much here in Bethlehem, but you are welcome to sleep in our small house.

Philosopher 1: Your kindness is great.

Philosopher 2: This new king is lucky to have such giving parents.

The philosopher and Joseph, Mary and Jesus lie down to sleep.

SCENE II (c)

Narrator: While they slept, angels appeared to the Philosophers.

Head Angel: You wise men! Philosophers!

Angels: *(smaller angels shake the philosophers)* Wake-up! Wake-up!

Head Angel: You must leave now! King Herod wants to kill Jesus! He is using you to find the baby.

Angels: Leave now! Leave now!

Head Angel: Do not return to Herod, but take the route through the mountains toward the

East. Go now and I will see to the safety of the child.

Philosophers silently and hastily depart. Angel moves over to Joseph and wakes him.

Head Angel: Joseph, get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt.

Angels: To Egypt!

Head Angel: And stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him.

Angel hands Joseph a cloak and a staff for the journey.

Narrator: So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt.

Joseph and Mary carry Jesus through the crowd on their way to Egypt (the chapel).

Narrator: And there Jesus grew into childhood, learning the ways of God and becoming strong. Although many lost their lives to Herod's hatred and fear, Jesus was safe in Egypt. But all kings die, and when Herod died, and all his evil plans with him, they returned home. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophet:

Prophet: I called my son out of Egypt.

Narrator: There would be other kings, and other threats. But Jesus –son of Mary and Joseph, and the son of God – would be a new kind of king reigning over a new kind of kingdom. Of him the prophet spoke when he sang:

Prophet: He will judge God's people in righteousness.
He will defend the afflicted among the people
He will save the children of the needy;
He will end oppression.
He will endure as long as the sun,
as long as the moon, through all generations.

PEOPLE SING: "Joy to the world!"

END