

The Rock, the Road, and the Rabbi

Session 1: Bethlehem

Recommended Reading: Chapters 5 and 6

Introductions

Please share with the group your name, your parish, and whether or not you are hoping to attend next year's pilgrimage.

Opening Discussion

What images, feelings, or thoughts come to mind when you hear the word Bethlehem?

Watch Video

What caught your attention as you viewed the video?

The Rabbi suggests that major events in the life of Jesus revolved around Jewish holidays/feasts. Is this coincidence or do you think there was a purpose in this inter-connectedness between the life of Jesus and the life of Israel?

Read Luke 2:1-18 as a group

What did you think about the Rabbi's explanation about the significance of the manger and swaddling cloths in Luke's birth narrative?

What do you notice about Luke's birth narrative that is different from the holiday Hallmark pictures?

Read Matthew 1:18-2:2 as a group

Did you note the differences in Matthew's narrative? What is it they have in common?

Closing Discussion

How did today's presentation affect your perception of the nativity and Bethlehem?

What is it you would hope to find or experience during a visit to the Church of the Nativity, the traditional site of Jesus' birth?

Staying Connected

Day 1: Read Matthew 2:1-18

- Why would Herod have been disturbed by the birth of someone whom the Magi called king of the Jews?
- How did Herod try to deal with the problem?

Day 2: review day 1 readings

- Consider that the non-Jewish magi went to worship the king of the Jews. Why might this be important to us?
- King Herod was rich and powerful. How does our culture urge us to admire and envy people like him?
- List some concrete steps we can take to resist this influence.

Day 3: Reflection

- Jesus was born in a stable, or a cave, where animals were kept and wrapped in strips of cloth. It was not a glorious entrance into this world. How does his birth, and the circumstances surrounding his arrival relate to your understanding of who Jesus is?

Day 4: Read Exodus 12:1-3

- What did you learn in this passage that sheds light on what Jesus accomplished for us as our Passover Lamb?
- Note any similarities you see between the need for the sacrificed lamb to be unblemished and the life of Jesus.

Day 5: Reflection

- What meaning does the Passover (as we understand it today), the Passover lamb, and the Jewish tradition of Passover have in your life today?

Day 6: Prayer

- Spend some time in prayer today, reflecting on what you have learned from scripture and about yourself. Ask God to help you discern what role you may have in helping others to know what you have learned.

Day 7: A Day of rest.