

The earliest known account of **Mary's birth** is found in the Gospel of James, an apocryphal text from the late second century. This text describes Mary's father Joachim as a wealthy member of one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. He and his wife Anne were deeply grieved by their childlessness.



**First Reading:** (*Mic 5:2-4*) Thus says the Lord: You, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in travail has brought forth; then the rest of his brethren shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.

**Ps 12:6-7**

**R./ I exult for Joy in the Lord**

**Gospel:** (*Mt 1:18-23*) The birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us).

**Reflection:** Humanity is the story of great family relationships, without which we would be just another animal species in the world. It is so revealing that the beginning of the New Testament acknowledges this story of relationships and reveals God's wish to be "with us." Some Christian denominations emphasise the dimension of "Personal Saviour," and "God of me." The genealogy part of the gospel reveals that it is not just "God with me," but a clear emphasis on "God with us." It makes a lot of difference in our attitudes and approaches to the world around us. **Awareness of the web of relationships gives meaning to the commandments, laws and statutes of God.**