

The Nativity of the Lord

These Teaching Tips are not Scripture commentaries, but rather brief pointers for avoiding unintended anti-Jewish bias and for highlighting positive observations about Judaism which might otherwise go unnoticed.

The Child in the Manger is a Jewish Child

An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah,* the son of David, the son of Abraham. . . . (Mt 1:1).*

Thus begins Matthew's version of the genealogy of Jesus, which we hear proclaimed in the liturgy on Christmas Eve. And then we hear:

'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.' (Mt 1:23)

How extraordinary is the mystery we Christians celebrate at Christmas: that God, who is beyond every human imagining, has in fact been seen, heard, touched in history in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The Word became flesh, not in an abstract notion of 'humanity', but in a Jewish body, culture, in a Torah-observant Jewish community with a sacred story centred on the God of Israel...

According to Christian faith in its the interpretation of holy Scripture, this is where the Incarnation takes place: in a son of Abraham, a son of Israel, a son of David, son of Mary . . . Son of God.

St Pope John Paul II put it this way:

Jesus' human identity is determined on the basis of his bond with the people of Israel, with the dynasty of David and his descent from Abraham. And this does not mean only a physical belonging. By taking part in the synagogue celebrations where the Old Testament texts were read and commented upon, Jesus also came humanly to know these texts; he nourished his mind and heart with them, using them in prayer and as an inspiration for his actions. Thus he became an authentic son of Israel, deeply rooted in his own people's long history. . . . To deprive Christ of his relationship with the Old Testament is therefore to detach him from his roots and to empty his mystery of all meaning.

- John Paul II, Address to the Pontifical Biblical Commission, Rome, 11 April 1997

And on the fiftieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, the Pontifical Council for Religious Relations with the Jews reaffirmed:

Fully and completely human, a Jew of his time, descendant of Abraham, son of David, shaped by the whole tradition of Israel, heir of the prophets, Jesus stands in continuity with his people and its history.

- CRRJ, "The Gifts and the Calling of God Are Irrevocable" (Rom 11:29). A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining to Catholic-Jewish Relations... (2015)

Amidst the joy of the great mystery we contemplate at Christmas, may our grateful remembrance include a profound appreciation of the Jewish people and their long history of covenantal vitality, which continues to this day.

For the child in the manger is a Jewish child.