

The Birth of Jesus Christ

by Father John Catoir, JCD-Feb. 22, 2019

Over the years, many readers have asked me to repeat a column I wrote a few years ago. The article contained an excerpt written by Anna Catherina Emmerick, a mystic born of devout parents in Westphalia, Germany in 1774.

At 28 she entered the Augustinian convent a few miles away from her home. A few years later, in 1811, Napoleon Bonaparte was on the rampage suppressing all religious communities, and all the nuns were forced to flee from their convents.

Catherina was given shelter by a kind family, and remained with them until her death in 1824. A few months after her arrival, she received the stigmata. The wounds of the Passion of Christ appeared on her hands, feet and side. Soon she began receiving mystical revelations about the life of Jesus. Scripture scholars have been amazed at the accuracy of her knowledge concerning the geography, language and culture of the times Jesus lived and died.

Moviemaker Mel Gibson used her revelations as the basis of his movie, The Passion of the Christ.

The following passage is about the birth of Jesus, taken directly from Catherina's writings:

"Mary begged Joseph to do all in his power to find a fitting place for the birth of Jesus. This Child promised by God, was supernaturally conceived. She invited Joseph to unite with her in prayer for the hard-hearted people who earlier refused them shelter. Joseph proposed bringing some pious women whom he knew in Bethlehem to her assistance; but Mary would not allow it. She declared that she had no need of anyone.

It was five o'clock in the evening when Joseph brought Mary to a cave, one that he knew from childhood and which served as a shelter for shepherds in bad weather. He hung up several lamps and made a place for their animal.

When Mary told Joseph that her time was drawing near and that he should now betake himself to prayer; he did her bidding and left her, turning toward his sleeping place. Before entering his little recess, he looked back once toward that part of the cave where Mary knelt in prayer, her back to him. He saw the cave filled with a light that streamed from Mary. It was as if he were, like Moses, looking into the burning bush, He sank prostrate to the ground in prayer, and looked not back again. The glory around Mary became brighter and brighter, and the lamps that Joseph had lit were no longer to be seen. Mary knelt, her flowing robe spread out before her. At the twelfth hour, her prayer became ecstatic...the light around her grew even more resplendent. At that moment she gave birth to the Infant Jesus. I saw Him, a tiny child far brighter than all the other brilliancy.

Mary's ecstasy lasted some moments longer. Then I saw her spread a cover over the Child, but she did not yet take him up. I saw the Child stirring and heard it crying, and only then did Mary seem to recover full consciousness. She lifted the Child to her breast and sat veiled. I saw angels around her in human form prostrate on their faces....sometime after the birth Mary called Joseph who was still prostrate in prayer, and urged him to look upon the Sacred Gift from Heaven, and then Joseph came took the Child into his arms."