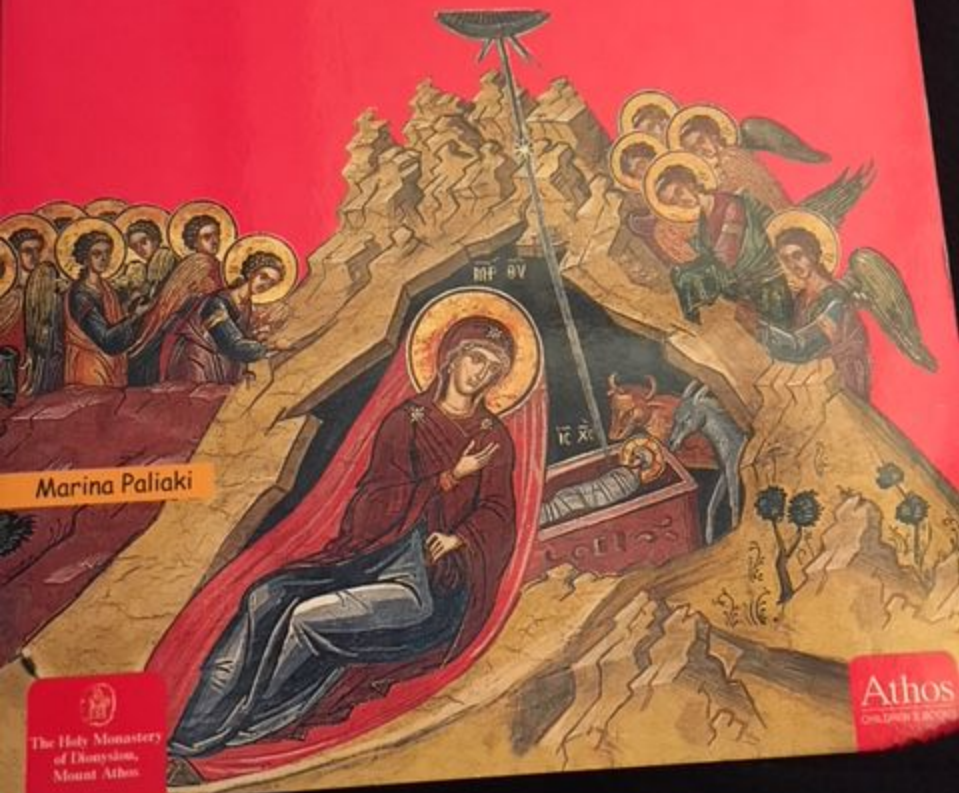


# The Birth of Christ

in Icons



Marina Paliaki

  
The Holy Monastery  
of Dionysios,  
Mount Athos

Athos  
CHILDREN'S BOOKS

From when she was a very little girl the Mother of God lived in the temple of Jerusalem. There she lived a quiet life of prayer that cleansed her heart and made her ready to become the Mother of God.



When she grew up the priests of the temple put her in the care of an elderly man, Joseph, for Mary's parents had died and gone to heaven.



## THE ANNUNCIATION



One day, the Archangel Gabriel appeared before Mary,  
kissed her and said:  
"Hail, Mary, full of Grace. The Lord is with you  
and He sends you His grace."

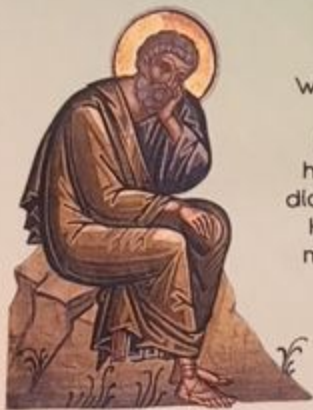




The Mother of God was startled at his words. Then the angel said to her:  
"Do not be afraid, Mary. God has blessed you  
and you will give birth to His Son."  
"How will this happen?" she asked full of wonder.  
*How many stars can you see on the Mother of God's cloak?*



"The Holy Spirit will overshadow you.  
So that you may be sure, I have something else to tell you.  
Even though she is very old,  
your cousin Elizabeth is expecting a baby  
and will give birth to a son. For everything is possible for God."  
Then Mary said,  
"I am the servant of God. Let it be as you said."



When Joseph realized that Mary was expecting a baby, he was troubled and didn't know what to do. He even thought he might send her away secretly.



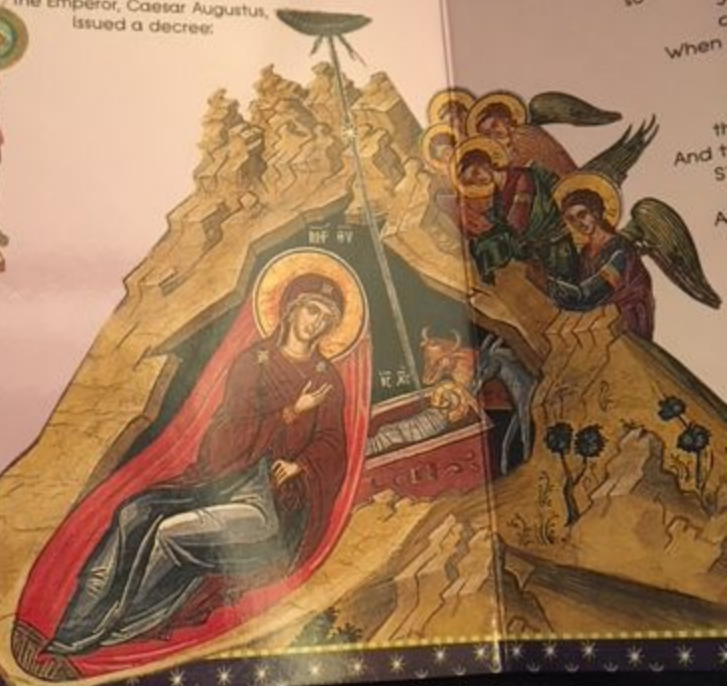
Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and reassured him:  
"Joseph, look after Mary and protect her, for the child that she will give birth to comes from the Holy Spirit. It will be a boy and you will call him Jesus."  
So Joseph did as the angel said and became the protector of Mary and Christ.





When the time came near  
for Mary to give birth,  
the Emperor, Caesar Augustus,  
issued a decree:

"We will count  
how many people  
live in the Empire.  
Everyone must go  
to his town or  
village to be  
registered."



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## THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

Joseph was from a town called Bethlehem,  
so this was where he had to go to obey the Emperor.

Joseph placed Mary on a donkey  
and they started on their journey.

When Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem,  
all the inns were full and

there was no room anywhere.

So they had to stay in a cave

that was used as a stable for animals.

And that was where Mary gave birth to Christ.

She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes

and laid Him in a manger to sleep.

A little ox and a donkey kept Him warm.

*What is the baby Jesus doing in this picture?*







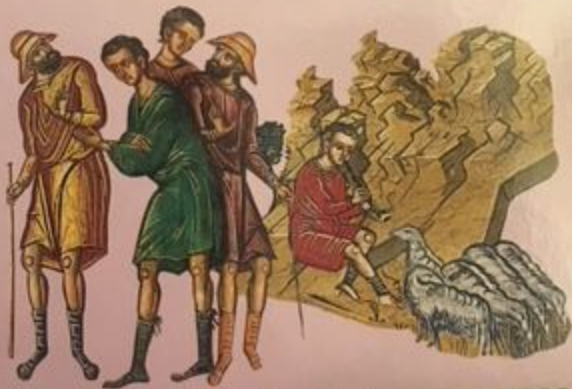
A bright star appeared  
above the cave where Mary,  
the baby Jesus and Joseph  
were staying. A multitude of angels  
glorified God singing,

"Glory to God in the Highest,  
and on earth peace to people  
who enjoy his favor."

Nearby some shepherds  
were keeping watch over their flocks.  
An angel appeared before them  
and a bright light  
shone around them.

The shepherds were  
very afraid. The angel  
said to them, "Do not  
be afraid. I bring you  
good news. Today a  
Savior has been born  
for you! Go quickly to  
worship Him!

*What is the little  
shepherd boy doing?*



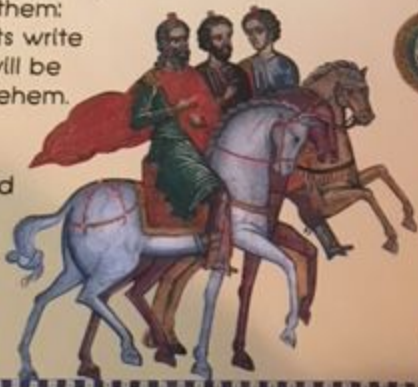


The shepherds hurried off to the cave, where they found Mary, Joseph, and the baby in the manger. They glorified and praised God for everything they had seen and heard.

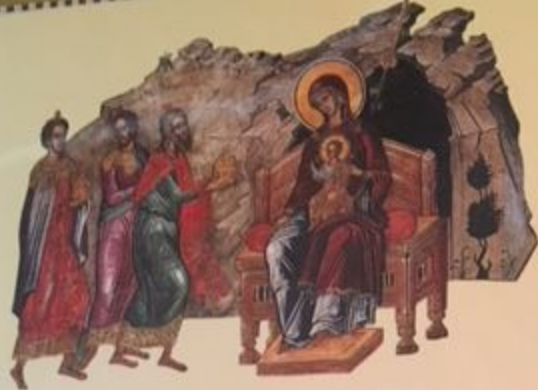


After some time, three Wise Men from the East arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the new-born King? We saw his star and have come to worship him."

King Herod lived in Jerusalem also and was disturbed when he heard this. He was afraid that Christ would take his power away from him. So he called the Wise Men to his palace and said to them: "Our prophets write that Christ will be born in Bethlehem. Go and look for him, and when you find him, tell me so that I too may go and worship him."







The Wise Men left  
the palace.  
And there, the star  
stood over the house  
where Mary and  
the baby lived.  
The Wise Men reached  
the house and offered  
gifts to Christ.

*Gold,*  
for he was  
a king

*Frankincense,*  
for he was  
God

*Myrrh,*  
that is perfumed oils,  
for he came into the  
world to be Crucified



As they were leaving,  
God warned the Wise Men  
not to say anything to King Herod,  
because the King wanted to harm  
the baby. And so they returned to  
their homeland by another way.

*What do you think the angel  
is saying to the Wise Men?*



*Which angel visited the Mother of God? Which animals kept the little baby Jesus warm? What do the gifts that the Wise Men brought symbolize?*

Children learn about the birth of Christ through looking at the beautiful wall-paintings by Tzortzis from the main church of Dionysiou Monastery on Mount Athos.

They also embark on a wonderful journey through the world of Byzantine art.

An art that is close to children's souls,  
for it does not use shadow, perspective, divisions or time.

Dionysiou Monastery kindly gave permission for these wonderful frescoes to be reproduced in the present edition. It is their hope that these icons will speak to the souls of our children.



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The Mother of God

The Life of Christ  
Icons