

Children's Holiday Pageant 2023
"The Early Life of Mary"
Based on "The Infancy Gospel of James"
FINAL DRAFT 12-01-23

PROLOGUE: Magdalene's Home in the Southern France

MARY and MARY MAGDALENE are sitting at a plain wooden table drinking tea.

MARY MAGDALENE

Mary, how great of you to come and visit me. I've been so lonely here all by myself, since Jesus died. I miss the days of traveling with Him, and studying the Sacred texts together. I remember the two of us making a trip to Egypt, which was very instructive.

MARY

I didn't know. We got so caught up in what was happening that we never really got to know each other. It's so great to see you, too. I had to get away from those Apostles. They just bicker amongst themselves, and they have no respect for me.

MARY MAGDALENE

I know what you mean. I'll bet they'll cut most of who we are out of all the stories they tell.

MARY

I hope not. Because some of the most amazing parts of the whole saga happened long before there WAS a Jesus.

MARY MAGDALENE

You know, I never really got to talk with you about that. I don't even know who your parents are.

Suddenly the stage is filled with other members of the cast, who begin singing.

CAST

Who was Mary?
There isn't much we know.
Just a teen from unknown town
Who had a certain "glow"?
Just a vessel for the Babe
To join us here below?
Mary was so much more.

CAST (*continued*)

Who was Mary?
Well, soon we will begin
With a Gospel that ended up
Tossed in the garbage bin.
But we dug it out and found
A wondrous tale to spin.
Yes, Mary was so much more.
Mary was so much more.

ADALIA (*spoken*)

We’re talking about “The Infancy Gospel of James,” which was taken out of circulation in the 5th Century by Pope Innocent the First.

ALCIMUS

Which some call “The Protoevangelium of James,” which is a mouthful!

CHANNAH

It was written down in the second century, about 200 years after the lifetime of Jesus, and made up of stories people told about the conception and early life of Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

CAST (*singing*)

So who was Mary?
Just listen, and you’ll see
That Mary was so much more,
For sure.
Mary was so much more.

The CAST leaves, and the focus shifts back to MARY and MARY
MAGDALENE

MARY

Well, my Dad is Joachim and my Mom Anna, and I was born in Nazareth, which you may have heard of. But my story really begins before I was born, when my parents were trying to have me. My Mom told me about the day that my Dad, Joachim, went to the Temple to drop off his offerings, which is what people did in those days...

SCENE 1: The Temple

JOACHIM walks up to the Temple with two large bags filled with his sacrifices. He is met by REUBEN.

JOACHIM

Good morning, Reuben. I’m here to bring my offerings and place them on the altar. Since I am a rich man, and have done much for my community, I bring two offerings. This one will be for all the people, and this one offered to the Lord, to atone for my sins.

REUBEN

Not so fast, Joachim! You can’t make an offering unless you’ve produced an Israelite child. And, according to The Book, you haven’t.

JOACHIM

Now wait a second. What do the other childless men in the village do? They don’t get to give sacrifices either?

REUBEN

Actually, The Book says that you are the only one in all the 12 Tribes who hasn’t produced a child. So there are no others to compare you to.

JOACHIM

That can’t be true. Let me look at The Book.

JOACHIM walks over to a table where a really large book sits. and begins leafing through it, stopping now and then, as if he’s found another childless man, then seeing that he hasn’t and continuing to look. While he’s doing this, Reuben sings:

REUBEN

He thinks he’ll find another childless man in there,
But he won’t!
He thinks he’ll find a way to give his sacrifice,
But he won’t.

I’ve read every page,
Ev’ry entry, every word,
And I can guarantee
All have produced but he!

You may feel bad for Anna and for Joachim,
But I don’t.
I don’t know why the Lord has kept them childless.
And I won’t.

But I must follow rules, and one is very clear:
You cannot give unless - a child you can express!

JOACHIM finishes looking at The Book, and, resigned, turns back to REUBEN.

JOACHIM

OK, OK. You’re right. I’m the only one. I guess I’ll keep my sacrifices until I do have a child. But they’re really big ones.

REUBEN (*as he’s leaving*)

Good luck with that! You and Anna are far past child-bearing age.

JOACHIM (*to himself*)

I remember the story of Abraham. He was very old, and God granted him a son, named Isaac. So there’s still hope for me. I’ve just got to pray like crazy for Anna to get pregnant. I know! I’ll go out into the Wilderness for 40 days and nights, and fast and pray the whole time. After all that God will surely grant my wish.

JOACHIM heads off to the Wilderness.

SCENE 2: The Wilderness

While slow music plays, JOACHIM prays, walks around, scratches the days one by one on a tree, and looks more and more frazzled. Then, when as he begins to collect his things to give up and go home, AZARIEL, an Angelic Messenger, appears.

AZARIEL

Joachim, I am Azariel, a Messenger from Heaven. God has been watching you here in the desert. And, I don’t mind saying, he’s quite impressed. So impressed, in fact, that he’s going to grant your wish. So pack up your stuff and head home. I think you’ll be happy with what you’ll find!

JOACHIM retrieves all his belongings as fast as he can and hurries back home.

SCENE 3: The House and Garden of Joachim and Anna

ANNA is in the kitchen of their house, pacing and feel sorry for herself.

ANNA

Not only am I a “Wilderness Widow,” but I’m childless as well! And I’m not getting any younger. What am I going to do?

JUDITH

Well, Ma’am, there must be a reason you’re childless. I guess God didn’t want you to bear any children for Israel. Or maybe he thinks you’d be a terrible Mom. Ever thought of that?

ANNA

Oh, Judith, stop mocking me. I can't believe God doesn't want me to have children. I'm just unlucky is all. Remember Sara and Abraham? God blessed them with their son, Isaac, when they were even older than me and Joachim. So it could happen. Now please prepare another “dinner for one” for tonight.

ANNA leaves her kitchen, and walks out to the garden behind their house. Once there she sees a nest of sparrows in a nearby tree, and begins to sing to them, as they fly all around her, occasionally singing in harmony with her.

ANNA (*singing*)

Poor me! Poor me!
Why was I even born?
For I have been reviled and mocked,
From day to night to morn.
Poor me! Poor me!

Even the sparrows make new sparrows,
Easy as 1-2-3.
Look how they flit from tree to tree to tree.
Poor me! Poor me!

All of the goats and sheep and cattle
Bear all their young with ease.
They create kids and lambs and calves, so please.
Tell me: Why not me!

Even the rivers swell their banks, and flow, on they go.
Even the crops down in the fields grow tall, in the fall.

Poor me! Poor me!
Why was I even born?
For all of nature's mocking me.
My heart and honor torn.
Poor me! Poor me!

BARACHIEL

Anna, I am Barachiel, a Messenger from Heaven. The Lord has heard your prayers and supplications (and your beautiful song!), and has chosen to grant your request. One of my fellow Messengers spoke to your husband, Joachim, and he's headed home right now. So hurry, and run to meet him!

ANNA

How wonderful! I promise that, whether the child be a boy or girl or gender fluid, they will dedicate their entire life to God. Thank you, Barachiel, thank you!

BARACHIEL

Make haste! Be on your way.

ANNA hurries home, and when she arrives, it is just as JOACHIM is running up. They embrace, and throws her arms around his neck, exclaiming:

ANNA

Now that you're back home, I am no longer a widow. AND no longer childless, for I can feel the seed of the Lord in my womb!

JOSEPH AND ANNA

Praise the Lord!

INTERLUDE 1: Magdalene's Home in Southern France

MARY

So they went home, and nine months later I was born. Pretty amazing, right?

MARY MAGDALENE

Totally! What a magical start to a wonderful life.

MARY

And I was a quick study, too. My mom told me that I was only 6 months old when I took seven steps towards her, and walked into her arms. From that moment she knew how special I was, and vowed to keep me safe until I was old enough to be brought to the Temple to be educated along with all the other girls. So she turned my bedroom into a sort of sanctuary and playground, found some young girls around the neighborhood to come and play with me. And that's where I lived until I was three years old.

MARY MAGDALENE

Wow! Didn't you go stir crazy? I can't imagine staying in my bedroom for 2 and a half years.

MARY

Oh, no. I was able to go out now and then. In fact, when I turned one they had a big banquet for me. All the mucky-mucks of the town were there...

SCENE 4: A Banquet Hall in Nazareth, On Mary’s First Birthday

Music plays as a big banquet arrives on stage, along with a large group of guests. Guests include the ZADOK, THE HIGH PRIEST, REUBEN, the TEMPLE PRIESTS, ANNAS THE SCHOLAR, and two friends of JOACHIM and ANNA’s from the town.

JOACHIM

Good afternoon, everyone, and thanks so much for coming. We are here to celebrate the first birthday of our lovely, daughter, Mary.

ZADOK, THE HIGH PRIEST

God Almighty, bless this child and place her name on the lips of future generations!

BANQUET GUESTS

So be it! Amen!

BANQUET GUESTS (*singing*)

Hail Mary, she’s reached one year of age.
Hail Mary, her story’s all the rage!
We cannot wait to see
What she turns out to be,
As she makes her journey
To full maturity.
Hail Mary! Hail Mary!

Until that day we’ll eat and drink and otherwise make merry,
And all along we’ll say: Hail Mary!
Hail Mary! Hail Mary!

ANNA

Thank you so much for your presence and your lovely song. It has inspired me to sing, too, although I have nothing prepared. So I will let the spirit move in me, and sing in praise of my wonderful daughter, Mary.

ANNA (*singing*)

My very special child, so pure in heart and mind,
May you grow strong and share your song with all of humankind.
I wish you all the blessings this planet can bestow,
And I will wait in wonder as you grow,
My very special child, Mary.
My oh, so special child.
Mary.

The assembled BANQUET GUESTS cheer the song, and ANNA returns to her table.

INTERLUDE 2: Magdalene’s Home in Southern of France

MARY MAGDALENE

OK, so you had a big celebration when you probably didn’t remember any of it. What happens next.

MARY

Well, I was taken back to my bedroom-slash-sanctuary-slash-playground, and continued to play with my friends. Then, when I turned 3, my parents decided that I was ready to be taken to the Temple for further schooling. I was sad to leave them, but knew that it was the best thing for me. And, also, they’d promised the Lord when I was conceived that my life would be dedicated to God. Soon the day arrived...

SCENE 5: The Steps of the Temple

JOACHIM, ANNA and MARY arrive at the Temple. There is much rejoicing by the PRIESTS, for not only had they been at the 1st birthday banquet, but news of this amazing and Holy Child had spread throughout the community. So the electricity in the air was palpable. When MARY arrives, she walks up the steps of the Temple, stopping on the third step, and begins to dance.

MARY (as a 3 Year Old)

To show you how excited I am to be entering the Temple, I'll dance for you.

HIGH PRIEST

Why, certainly, little one. Dance away!

MARY dances a wonderful and vibrant dance, including cartwheels. When the dance ends. Every one applauds. They have clearly fallen in love with MARY.

SCENE 6: Within the Walls of the Temple

As the previous scene fades away, we see Mary disappear into the Temple itself. There she meets other young girls who already live there. Then we see a montage of quick scenes, without talking but accompanied by music. They include: drawing, singing, dancing, studying the Holy Texts, learning to write, exercising, and learning to cook and garden. Periodically LAMASSU, an Angelic Messenger, feeds Mary, a little like a mother bird feeding her offspring. Soon MARY AS A 3 YEAR OLD disappears, and in her place we see MARY AS A 12 YEAR OLD. Nine years have passed.

SCENE 7: The Courtyard in Front of the Temple, Nine Years Later

ONIAS

Mary is getting older now, and we are no longer prepared to take care of her properly. It's time we find her a caretaker in the city.

MANESSAH

I suppose we should pray to the Lord for guidance, and see what answer we get.

ALCIMUS

Good idea. Let's pray.

All the Priests pray for a bit. Suddenly the answer appears to one of them, MENELAUS.

MENELAUS

I received the idea from the Lord. We will gather all the Widowers of the town and ask for their staffs. We will take the staffs and place them on the altar. When the staffs are there, God will give us a sign on one of the staffs. And the owner of that staff will be the Widower who shall be the caretaker of Mary.

ONIAS

That sounds sort of crazy! Are you sure you received this idea from the Lord?

MANESSAH

Don't doubt, Onias. If Menelaus is sure, then we should all be sure.

ALCIMUS

I agree. Let's bring our idea to the High Priest, and find a Trumpeter to announce it to the town.

MENELAUS

I know a guy.

ALL PRIESTS (*variously*)

Terrific. Let's get on it. What a great idea. You know, I'm going to miss having Mary around. She'll be better off, though.

The Priests hurry off, and soon we hear a trumpet. A TRUMPETER walks on, playing, announcing the “Gathering of the Widowers”. One by one the WIDOWERS of the town enter, with their staffs. JOSEPH is among them. The HIGH PRIEST takes their staffs and brings them into the Temple. The HIGH PRIEST and all the other PRIESTS wait for the sign. MARY is with them, looking nervous.

After a while, when nothing happens, they gather up the staffs and hand them back to the WIDOWERS. When the staff is returned to JOSEPH, immediately a DOVE flies out of the wood of the staff, circles around JOSEPH, and then perches on his head. Everyone who has gathered is amazed, and has a good laugh.

ZADOK, THE HIGH PRIEST

Joseph, it is clear that the Lord has chosen you to be the new caretaker of Mary, who has grown too old to be kept in the Temple any longer. Congratulations!

JOSEPH

But sir, I do not want this honor. I am an old man, and I already have plenty of children, much older than Mary, to care for. Besides, I'm afraid people will make jokes about me. Can't you give her to someone else?

HIGH PRIEST

Don't you know what happens when you don't obey the Lord? Remember Dathan, Abiron and Kore. God split the earth open, and it swallowed them whole. And they were suddenly no more. Is that what you want for yourself, Joseph? For your family to be left without you?

JOSEPH

OK, I get it. I'll take her on. But I'm a busy guy, so I won't be home much. It's a good thing I have older children to take care of her.

MARY

I thank you for your kindness, Joseph. I will be a good helper and valuable addition to your household. I am most grateful for your hospitality.

JOSEPH

Good to hear it. Follow me.

INTERLUDE 3: Magdalene's Home in Southern France

MARY MAGDALENE

This Joseph sounds awful! You must've been terrified!

MARY

Actually, no. He was a sweetie at heart. Really more of a grumpy old man. And his children were very nice, and treated me with kindness and respect. Of course, as soon as we arrived at his house, he announced that he had a big building project in a faraway town, so he'd be leaving and not seeing me for a while. So there I was, in Joseph's house but without Joseph, being doted on by his adult sons. It was very pleasant, actually. And that's the way I spent the next four years.

We see MARY AS A 12 YEAR OLD in town, helping various people by doing acts of kindness such as healing the sick, helping the elderly and caring for the infirm. The scene fades out.

SCENE 8: The Temple and the Temple Well, Six Months Later

The HIGH PRIEST is standing in the Temple with the PRIESTS.

HIGH PRIEST

It is high time that we create a new veil for the Temple, The old one is getting quite worn out. We should call some of the graduates from the Temple School to do the task. They’ve been trained in sewing and fabric design, and should do well. And don’t forget Mary, who we gave to Joseph. She should definitely be there.

PRIESTS (*variously*)

Yes. I agree. Wonderful idea, as always, sir. We’ll get right on it.

The scene changes, and the young girls enter. There is a variety of colors of thread or ribbons in front of them, and they are all very anxious to get started.

ONIAS

Thanks for coming. Do help us distribute the ribbons and thread equitably, we’ll do what we’ve always done: cast lots. Here’s how it works. Alcimus, over here (*points to his fellow priest, ALCIMUS*) will think of a number between 1 and 20, and write it on a slip of paper. Each of you will hold up your right hand with whichever fingers extended that you choose. I’ll add up the finger until we reach the number that Alcimus wrote down, and that’s who gets that color ribbon. Do you understand?

TEMPLE SCHOOL GRADUATES

Yes, we do.

They play the game until each of the girls has a spool of thread and a set of ribbons. MARY ends up with the purple thread. Then they do a dance where they weave the ribbons together into a veil, during which they sing a song.

TEMPLE SCHOOL GRADUATES (*singing*)

Ribbons and thread!
We’re all weaving ribbons and thread.
Greens and gold and blue and yellow,
Purple, scarlet, red.

TEMPLE SCHOOL GRADUATES (*singing*)

Ribbons and thread!
We're all weaving ribbons and thread.
Greens and gold and blue and yellow,
Purple, scarlet, red.

Weave them as one, 'till it is done,
Veil for the Temple to shield them from the sun.

Ribbons
And thread!

SCENE 8A: JOSEPH'S HOUSE, FOUR YEARS LATER

MARY (AS A 12 YEAR OLD) is doing chores in Joseph's house. She exits and MARY (AS A 16 YEAR OLD) takes her place. Before long SELAPHIEL, another Angelic Messenger, enters and speaks to MARY.

SELAPHIEL

Greetings, Mary. I am Selaphiel, a Messenger from Heaven. I have been sent my the Lord, your God, to bring you good news. Should you accept it, you will be blessed among women. You have been chosen to conceive and bear a child who will change the world, and bring it peace.

MARY

I don't doubt you, Selaphiel, for you are indeed an Angel. But I am curious. Since this will be a child of God, will I give birth in the usual way?

SELAPHIEL

No, Mary. Because the child to be born will be called Holy, son of the Most High.

MARY

But how is this possible?

SELAPHIEL

My dear girl, anything is possible with God.

MARY

Well, then, I accept this role that has been chosen for me, and I pray that everything you've told me comes true.

SELAPHIEL exits, and MARY considers what to make of the news.

SCENE 9: The House of Elizabeth and Zachariah

Four years have passed. MARY (as a 16 Year Old) decides to visit her cousin, ELIZABETH, who has also become miraculously pregnant.

ELIZABETH

Mary, how great to see you. How've you been?

MARY

Actually, I have wonderful news to tell you. I was visited by an Angelic Messenger, who told me that I would become pregnant and carry a child for the Lord. And, lo and behold, I am indeed pregnant, as are you.

ELIZABETH

I can see that, for the baby that I am carrying jumped with joy when you entered. How strange and wonderful are these times that we live, my dear Mary!

MARY

Strange and wonderful, indeed.

Three months pass, and soon MARY, now much more visibly pregnant, becomes frightened and decides to return home.

SCENE 10: Joseph's House, Three Months Later

MARY, now very pregnant, is sitting in the house doing some chores. JOSEPH walks in tiredly, having been away for months on a building project.

JOSEPH

Mary, look at you! What have you been up to while I've been gone? I was tasked to keep you safe and chaste, and this is how you repay me? But getting yourself pregnant?

MARY

Joseph, dear, I know as little about this as you do. But, believe me, it's not what you think. If you'll just let me explain.

JOSEPH

I think your appearance is about all the explaining that needs to be done. What am I going to do? It's the same story as Adam and Eve, where Adam trusted Eve to do the right thing, and as soon as he left she met that serpent and got them kicked out of the Garden of Eden. And now I'll be kicked out of our community, or worse!

MARY

Joseph, please calm down. Although I don't know exactly how this happened, I do know it was the work of the Lord, as I was visited by an Angelic Messenger, who asked me to carry a child for God. I beg you to believe me.

JOSEPH

Why should I believe you? You have brought shame upon me and our whole household.

JOSEPH walks to another part of the house and thinks to himself.

JOSEPH

I could let the High Priest know, but then they would take Mary and probably do away with her and the baby. And what if the baby really is the Son of God. Then what would have I done? I guess I'll have to end our agreement and find someone else to care for her.

JOSEPH goes back to where MARY is. MARY is sobbing and seemingly inconsolable.

JOSEPH

Mary, you can no longer be in my care. I will find somewhere else for you to go.

MARY

Joseph, please! Don't abandon me. I love it here, and I'm doing the work of the Lord.

JOSEPH

But I don't know what else to do. It's so confusing.

SCENE 11: Joseph's House, and The Wilderness Around It

It is the next morning. MARY is in the kitchen, and JOSEPH enters.

JOSEPH

Good morning, Mary.

MARY

Good morning, Joseph. Have you decided what to do?

JOSEPH

No, not yet.

MARY leaves to go to her bedroom. ANNAS THE SCHOLAR knocks at the door.

JOSEPH (*letting him in*)

Annas, how great to see you. What can I do for you?

ANNAS THE SCHOLAR

We haven't seen you around the Temple lately, Joseph, and we were getting concerned.

JOSEPH

I've been out of town on a big building project, and only returned a couple of days ago. I've been meaning to make it down to the Temple, but I've been resting.

ANNAS THE SCHOLAR

And how is you charge, Mary? Holding up well?

JOSEPH

Quite well, Annas.

MARY comes into the room to pick something up. ANNAS sees her and is startled.

ANNAS THE SCHOLAR

What is the meaning of this? She looks like she's about to have a child. Joseph, we left her in your care, and your only job was to keep her safe and free from sin. It looks like you've done a very poor job of that.

MARY

Sir, I can explain everything.

ANNAS runs off to get the HIGH PRIEST

JOSEPH (*to MARY*)

We're really in for it now. What am I supposed to do?

MARY

Let me explain it to him. I'm sure he'll understand.

ANNAS returns with the HIGH PRIEST in tow, along with MANESSAH and ALCIMUS.

ANNAS

Zadok, here is the girl I was telling you about. The pure one who was being saved for the work of the Lord.

ZADOK

Of course. It’s Mary, the one who danced for us on the Temple steps when she was only 3 years old. How did this happen, Mary?

MARY

Honorable High Priest, I assure you that this is not my doing, but the doing of God. You have to believe me.

JOSEPH

Yes, what she says is true. I instructed my children to watch over her while I was away, and, according to everyone involved, there has been no mischief.

HIGH PRIEST

We’ll see about that. Annas, I think this calls for them to drink of the “Water of Conviction.” Do you agree.

ANNAS

Certainly, Zadok. I think drinking “The Water of Conviction” is definitely in order.

JOSEPH and MARY (*variously*)

The “what”? What kind of water? I’ve never heard of this. Why don’t you just believe us?

HIGH PRIEST (*to ANNAS*)

Annas, I have brought a vial of “The Water of Conviction” with me, as I always do when traveling. Find me two goblets. I will have Mary and Joseph drink of the goblets, and then you’ll have Manessah and Alcimus follow them out to separate parts of the Wilderness. If, in 12 hours, they return in good health, then we’ll have our answer.

ANNAS

Certainly. Joseph, where can I find some goblets.

MARY

Let me get them for you.

MARY goes into the other room and quickly returns with two goblets. ZADOK takes a water bag out from underneath his robes, and fills the goblets. MARY and JOSEPH each drink the full portion, and then follow MANESSAH and ALCIMUS out, who take them in separate directions.

Time passes. MARY and JOSEPH both return in good health.

ZADOK

Alas, you have drunk “The Water of Conviction” and are both unharmed. So I do believe you, and now know that Mary has truly been chosen by God. Praise be to you, Mary, and thanks to you, Joseph, for keeping her safe so that the Lord could bless her.

MARY and JOSEPH hug, as they are overjoyed that they are safe their actions justified. All leave the stage while to set changes.

INTERLUDE 4: Magdalene’s Home in Southern France

MARY

So we went back to Joseph’s house, and we were very happy for a time, waiting for the baby to arrive.

MAGDALENE

Until?

MARY

Until we got word that the Emperor Augustus decided to do a Census. And because of that, we had to pack all of our things and head off to Bethlehem, where Joseph was from.

MAGDALENE

Sounds like a tough trip, especially with you being VERY pregnant!

MARY

Believe me, it was.

SCENE 12: The Road to Bethlehem

We see JOSEPH, MARY and the CHILDREN OF JOSEPH crossing the stage with a donkey in tow, and MARY sitting on the donkey. MARY alternates between crying inconsolably and laughing hysterically.

JOSEPH

Mary, what’s going on with you? You seem to be in a very merry mood one moment, and the next your are in tears.

MARY

Let me explain, dear Joseph. I imagine two sets up people in front of me. The first are weeping and mourning, and makes me very sad.

MARY (*continued*)

The second are celebrating and jumping for joy, and that makes me happy. So that’s the cause of my moods, Joseph, my dear.

JOSEPH

Alright, then. Whatever you say.

MARY

But Joseph, we must stop now. I feel as if I am about to give birth, and I certainly don’t want to do that on the back of a donkey! So please find me some shelter, and quick!

JOSEPH

Alright. Wait here for a few minutes with Samuel and my other children. And I’ll be right back.

All exit, and the scene changes. We are at the mouth of a large cave, with MARY inside, surrounded by JOSEPH’S CHILDREN.

SCENE 13: A Cave Outside of Bethlehem

JOSEPH

Mary, I must leave you and go and search for a midwife. For I can see that the moment of birth is close at hand.

MARY

Yes, please. And hurry!

SCENE 14: The Area Surrounding the Cave

The cave fades into the background, and birds, workers, sheep, a shepherd and a goat, along with a representation of a river, enter the stage. After a time of acting normally, the following happens: The birds pause in mid-flight. Workers reclining and eating and drinking on their lunch break stop with food halfway into their mouths and drink stuck on their lips. Sheep stopped in mid-step. A shepherd lifts his staff as if to strike a sheep, but the staff is seemingly suspended in mid-stroke. Goats were drinking by the river, but the current stopped flowing, and the water was stuck in the throats of the goats, without causing any harm to the goats themselves. Then, as quickly as it started, everything went back to normal.

As JOSEPH continues his travels, he spies SALOME, a young woman, walking the other way.

SALOME

Where are you going in such a hurry, sir?

JOSEPH

I am looking for a Hebrew midwife to come to a cave with me.

SALOME

Are you an Israelite?

JOSEPH

Yes.

SALOME

Then, yes, I am a midwife. And who is the one having the baby in the cave?

JOSEPH

It’s a long story, but she’s essentially my ward.

SALOME

So she’s having your baby, but she isn’t your wife?

JOSEPH

She is Mary, who was raised in the Temple. I obtained her when a dove flew out of my staff. And now she’s pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

SALOME

Really?

JOSEPH

Come and see, and help with the baby, which I fear may have already been born. For I just had a vision of time stopping, which I think coincided with the baby’s birth.

SALOME

Lead the way!

JOSEPH and SALOME run off to the cave.

SCENE 15: Back At A Cave Outside of Bethlehem

SALOME

What a great day this is, for I have seen a miracle, and salvation has come to Israel. A virgin has given birth, and somehow remained a virgin, and you know that’s not possible! So it must be a miracle.

SALOME runs off shouting the news of the birth, and soon the stage becomes flooded with people from near and far. A TRUMPETER enters, and blows his Trumpet, which draws even more people. Shepherds come with the lambs, and give gifts of goat cheese and woolen blankets. The Angels descend from Heaven to present their stars. All the other characters from the previous scenes stand behind the Holy Family.

SHEPHERDS

Please accept this cheese,
The product of our herd.
May it help you grow strong and healthy.

SHEEP

Please accept our woolen blankets, Baby Jesus,
To keep you warm on winter nights.
We are so glad to have you in the world.

HEAVENLY HOST OF ANGELS

We have been sent from the heavens,
Bringing stars from the sky.
May they help your light shine.

ENTIRE CAST (*singing*)

A CHILD IS BORN IN BETHLEHEM,
A CHILD IS BORN TO SHOW THE WAY.
ON THIS BRIGHT MORN A CHILD IS BORN IN BETHLEHEM.

ALL COME AND VIEW THIS NEWBORN BABE,
THIS PRECIOUS LIFE, THIS PROOF OF LOVE.
SO HEED THE CALL, COME ONE AND ALL TO BETHLEHEM.

WE COME TO WELCOME AND ADORE HIM,
WE BRING HIM GIFTS FROM NEAR AND FAR.
WE LONG TO LINGER HERE BEFORE HIM ALL THE DAY,
GUIDED BY THE ANGEL’S STAR.
A CHILD IS BORN IN BETHLEHEM
SO SOUND THE HORN, SHOULD OUT THE NEWS.
ALL CONFLICTS CEASE, JUST LOVE AND PEACE TODAY!

THIS PRECIOUS MORN, OUR GIFTS ADORN IN BETHLEHEM.
IN BETHLEHEM!

THE END