

# The House of Christmas



Chesterton and the Crèche



**It is said that when St. Francis staged in his own simple fashion a Nativity Play of Bethlehem, with kings and angels in the stiff and gay medieval garments and the golden wigs that stood for haloes, a miracle was wrought full of the Franciscan glory. The Holy Child was a wooden doll or bambino, and it was said that he embraced it and that the image came to life in his arms.**

G.K. Chesterton

**The very soul of Christmas and Christmas plays is this union of worship and play [...] the common villagers simply acted a Bethlehem play in their own streets. If we wish to have Bethlehem plays we must have the same spirit.**

G.K. Chesterton



**A donkey could go before all the horses of the world  
when it was really going to the temple. Romance  
means a holy donkey going to the temple. Realism  
means a lost donkey going nowhere.**

G.K. Chesterton



**The Santa Claus who commits a sort of saintly burglary at this time of the year is, of course, the St. Nicholas who was the patron saint of children. And it is particularly appropriate to remember that the Saint gained his title by a miracle of resurrection.**

G.K. Chesterton



**Rise, Joseph! heed my cry!  
All swiftly, silently,  
To Egypt take your flight!  
Depart, this very night!  
Herod his fury now,  
Is even to madness heaping;  
He longs to slay the Lamb  
In Mary's tendance sleeping,  
Take Mother and Child, and go  
From an impending woe.**

St. Thérèse of Lisieux



My Lady clad herself in blue,  
Then on me, like the seer long gone,  
The likeness of a sapphire grew,  
The throne of him that sat thereon.  
Then knew I why the Fashioner  
Splashed reckless blue on sky and sea;  
And ere 'twas good enough for her,  
He tried it on Eternity.

G.K. Chesterton



The beautiful shepherd is the real shepherd; it is the ugly, heavy, grimy shepherd who is a product of civilization; it is the dirty shepherd who is a mere work of art.

G.K. Chesterton





No one, whether shepherd or wise man,  
can approach God here below except by  
kneeling before the manger at  
Bethlehem and adoring him hidden in  
the weakness of a new-born child.

Catechism of the Catholic Church #563





**People in the town refused to receive the Mother and Joseph into any of their homes. Nowhere was there room. From the beginning, the world showed itself inhospitable towards the God who was to be born as Man.**

Pope Saint John Paul II



**And the mother still joys for the whispered  
First stir of unspeakable things,  
Still feels that high moment unfurling  
Red glory of Gabriel's wings.**

G.K. Chesterton



**But in the treasures of the Lord's bounty what can we find so suitable to the honour of the present feast as the peace, which at the Lord's nativity was first proclaimed by the angel-choir?**

Pope St. Leo the Great



**The Child that was ere worlds begun  
(...We need but walk a little way...  
We need but see a latch undone...)  
The Child that played with moon and sun  
Is playing with a little hay.**

G. K. Chesterton

The house from which the heavens are fed,  
The old strange house that is our own;  
Where tricks of words are never said,  
And Mercy is as plain as bread,  
And Honour is as hard as stone.

G. K. Chesterton





**The sceptics doubt whether any beasts of burden could have entered a stable that has to be reached by such steps. [...] But as a matter of fact, if the asses and goats of Jerusalem could not go up and downstairs, they could not go anywhere.**

G. K. Chesterton

**The Incarnation was itself a  
matter of clothing the  
incredible in flesh.**

G.K. Chesterton







So, when the song of children ceased  
And Herod was obeyed,  
In his high hall Corinthian  
With purple and with peacock fan,  
Rested that merry gentleman;  
And nothing him dismayed.

G. K. Chesterton



**Who are these people of his good will if not  
the poor, the watchful, the expectant, those  
who hope in God's goodness and seek him,  
looking to him from afar?**

Pope Benedict XVI



And the rafters of toil still are gilded  
With the dawn of the stars of the heart,  
And the wise men draw near in the twilight,  
Who are weary of learning and art.

G.K. Chesterton



**Every Christmas carol contains the suggestion that the Incarnation itself is a sort of colossal limitation.**

G.K. Chesterton



**Yes, in the one wise foolish hour  
God gives this strange strength to a man.  
He can demand, though not deserve,  
Where ask he cannot, seize he can.**

G.K. Chesterton



Let me go with you to the cave near the little town of Bethlehem [...] where "in the silence of the night" was heard the wail of the newborn infant, that eternal expression of the children of the earth. At the same moment was heard the voice of Heaven.

Pope St. John Paul II



**At the birth of the Son, there was a great shouting  
in Bethlehem; for the Angels came down, and  
gave praise there. Their voices were a great  
thunder: at that voice of praise the silent ones  
came, and gave praise to the Son.**

Ephraim the Syrian



And thou, that art still in thy cradle,  
The sun being crown for thy brow,  
Make answer, our flesh, make an answer,  
Say, whence art thou come - who art thou?  
Art thou come back on earth for our teaching  
To train or to warn - ?  
Hush - how may we know? -  
knowing only A child is born.

G.K. Chesterton



I am more moved to send  
everybody an after-Christmas  
greeting, or, if I had the industry,  
an after-Christmas card.

G.K. Chesterton



The Wise Men who followed the star of the first Christmas were described as Magi, men learned in the labyrinthine sciences of stars and systems. They did not, however, when they found the Holy Family in the stable, take the Child away forcibly to learn astronomy in the schools, because there was nothing but carpentry to be learnt in the home. The Wise men were wiser than that, for all their sciences.

G.K. Chesterton





**And the face of the tyrant is darkened,  
His spirit is torn,  
For a new king is enthroned; yea, the sternest,  
A child is born.**

G. K. Chesterton



**St. Joseph held the tiny hand,  
Fast in his own;  
“What will life hold for Him  
When He is grown?”**

Frances Chesterton



**Anyone thinking of the Holy Child as born in December would mean by it exactly what we mean by it; that Christ is not merely a summer sun of the prosperous but a winter fire for the unfortunate.**

G.K. Chesterton



**There is something beyond expression moving to the imagination in the idea of the holy fugitives being brought lower than the very land; as if the earth had swallowed them; the glory of God like gold buried in the ground.**

G.K. Chesterton

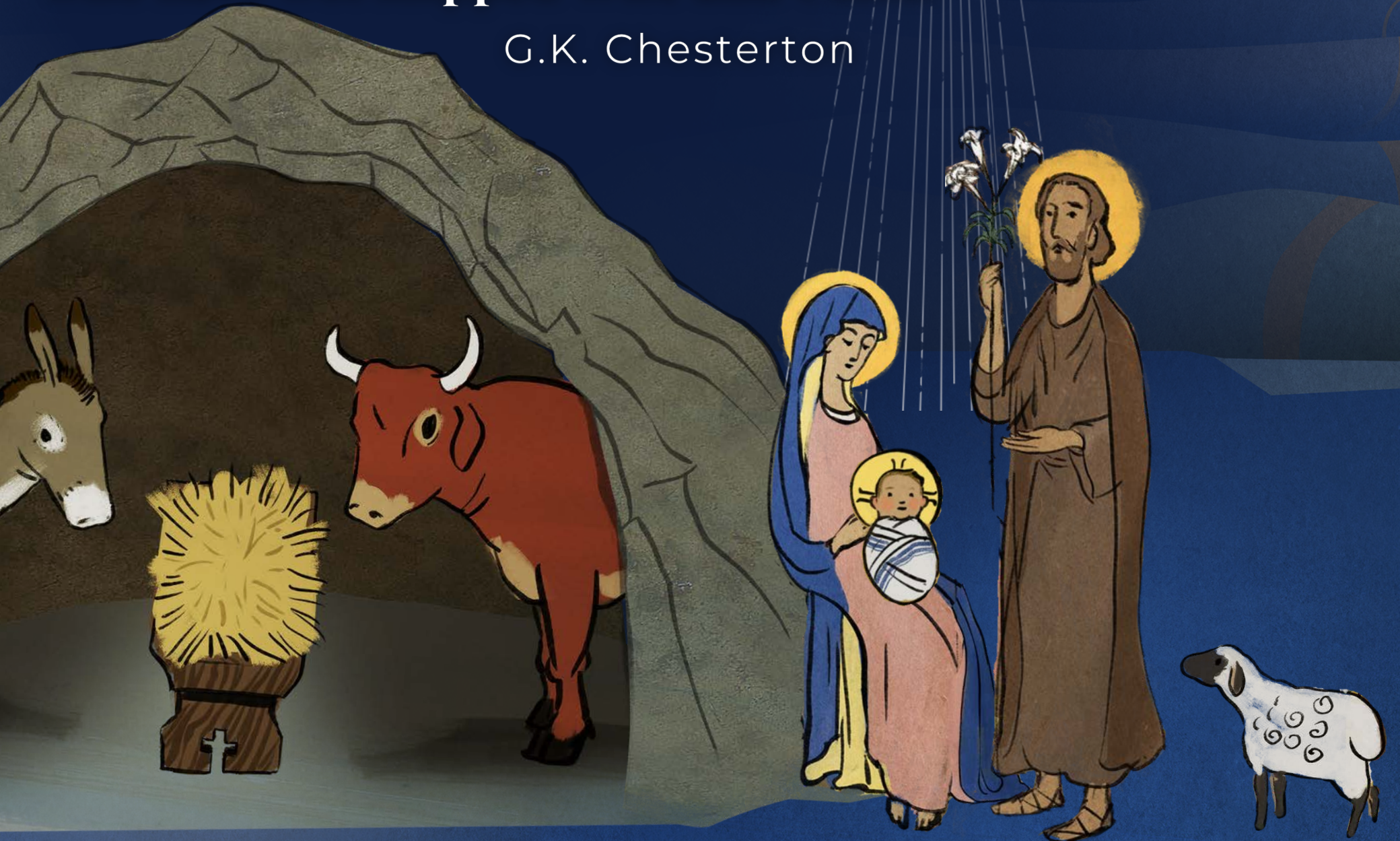
The thatch on the roof was as golden,  
Though dusty the straw was and old,  
The wind had a peal as of trumpets,  
Though blowing and barren and cold,  
The mother's hair was a glory  
Though loosened and torn,  
For under the eaves  
in the gloaming  
A child was born.

G.K. Chesterton



**St. Joseph to the Carpenters  
said on a Christmas Day:  
“The master shall have patience  
and the ‘prentice shall obey;  
And your word unto your women  
shall be nowise hard or wild:  
For the sake of me, your master,  
who have worshipped Wife and Child.”**

G.K. Chesterton





**But Christmas is not merely  
the glory of any god; it is  
especially the worship of a  
divine childhood.**

G.K. Chesterton



**Christianity was always a  
domestic religion. It began  
with the Holy Family.**

G.K. Chesterton



The East is full of donkeys, often very dignified donkeys; and when I turned my attention to the other grotesque quadruped, with an even larger head and even longer ears, he seemed to take on a deep shade of oriental mystery.

G.K. Chesterton





**If thou art one of those who are as yet unclean and uneatable and unfit for sacrifice, and of the gentile portion, run with the Star, and bear thy Gifts with the Magi, gold and frankincense and myrrh, as to a King, and to God, and to One Who is dead for thee.**

St. Gregory Nazianzen



**When men forget their birth and baptism, they have nothing except the folly of yesterday with which to compare the madness of to-day.**

G.K. Chesterton

The background is a dark blue night sky filled with small, colorful stars. A bright, multi-pointed starburst is positioned at the top center, with several thin, white lines radiating downwards from it. Below the sky, there are stylized, layered hills in shades of blue and green. A thin, orange-brown line, resembling a comet's tail or a path, curves across the hills from the right side towards the center. The overall scene is peaceful and evocative of a winter night.

# The House of Christmas

**Chesterton and the Crèche**

**Compiled by the Staff of the Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton**

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