

This may not seem like the most seasonally appropriate comment, but I really dislike camping. I love the outdoors during the day, but give me a hotel bed at night. Others see camping in a much different light, but for me it involves too much dirt, too little sleep, and an unfortunate lack of electricity and running water. I don't need the Ritz, but camping is just too bare bones for me.

This is why I'm so struck by the Greek translation of the verse from John's Gospel we hear at Christmas Mass during the day: "And the Word became flesh and pitched his tent among us" (John 1:14). *Pitched his tent among us.* Not an RV. Not a camper. Not a hotel room. Simply a tent. Bare bones. Vulnerable.

**The  
divine  
tent  
was  
pitched  
in the  
dirt  
where  
animals  
slept.**

This is how God chose to come—and come *among* us. Not over us. Not above us. *Among* us. It's as completely simple and completely mysterious as that.

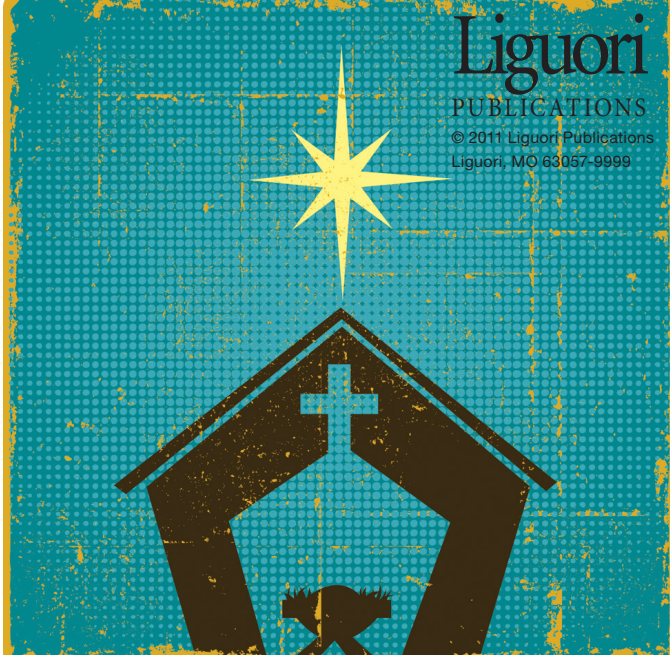
In the weeks leading up to this wonderful day, we've certainly been surrounded by and probably participated in much feasting and purchasing and planning—some of it to excess, for sure. Many presents were bought, festive parties planned, special food prepared. It's good and right to celebrate with friends and family and to share our blessings generously with those in need.

But the deepest truth of what we celebrate today is that God came among us in simplicity. There was little fuss, just a poor couple in a poor place. The divine tent was pitched in the dirt where animals slept.

God came as a vulnerable, helpless child—a mystery as old as the ages, but ever new each Christmas. Celebrate it well today. Merry Christmas!

JANEL ESKER

[sundaybulletins@liguori.org](mailto:sundaybulletins@liguori.org)



**Liguori**  
PUBLICATIONS  
© 2011 Liguori Publications  
Liguori, MO 63057-9999

## Today's Readings

**MIDNIGHT**  
Is 9:1–6  
Ti 2:11–14  
Lk 2:1–14

**DAWN**  
Is 62:11–12  
Ti 3:4–7  
Lk 2:15–20

**DAY**  
Is 52:7–10  
Heb 1:1–6  
Jn 1:1–18 or  
1:1–5, 9–14

December 25, 2011

# Dear Padre

## When is Jesus' birthday?

**Q** How do we know Jesus was born on December 25? I've checked my Bible, and I can't find any mention of the date.

Jimmy

Dear Jimmy,

You're right: The Bible doesn't say Jesus was born on December 25. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke are the only Scriptures to give much detail about Christ's birth and infancy. They name the key political figures of the day, but not much else (Luke 1:5 and 2:1-2). Neither evangelist included specific information about the dates.

Dates were apparently not important to the earliest Christians. Besides, the first few generations of Christ's followers were far more interested in celebrating Christ's resurrection each Sunday, and eventually on Easter, than they were in celebrating his birth.

Christians started to associate December 25 with Christ's nativity centuries after the fact: the year 336 according to the earliest evidence. The most popular theory is that the Church chose to replace a popular pagan Roman sun festival celebrating the winter solstice (December 21 or 22) with a Christian feast that could overtake the pagan festival and use its sun imagery to speak of Christ as the unconquered "Sun of Righteousness."

MATTHEW ALLMAN, CSsR  
[sundaybulletins@liguori.org](mailto:sundaybulletins@liguori.org)



**Monday**

**December 26**

*Saint Stephen, first martyr*  
 Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59  
 Mt 10:17-22

**Tuesday**

**December 27**

*Saint John, apostle and evangelist*  
 1 Jn 1:1-4 / Jn 20:1a, 2-8

**Wednesday**

**December 28**

*Holy Innocents, martyrs*  
 1 Jn 1:5-2:2 / Mt 2:13-18

**Thursday**

**December 29**

*Octave of Christmas*  
 1 Jn 2:3-11 / Lk 2:22-35

**Friday**

**December 30**

*Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph*  
 Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 or  
 Gn 15:1-6; 21:1-3  
 Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17 or  
 Heb 11:8, 11-12, 17-19  
 Lk 2:22-40 or 2:22, 39-40

**Saturday**

**December 31**

*Octave of Christmas*  
 1 Jn 2:18-21 / Jn 1:1-18

**Sunday**

**January 1**

*Mary, the Holy Mother of God*  
 Nm 6:22-27 / Gal 4:4-7  
 Lk 2:16-21

