

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

More than 2,020 years ago a miraculous birth occurred in a small village called Bethlehem, located in a part of the vast Roman Empire. Jewish people lived there who worshipped the God described in the Old Testament of the Bible. The Jews had been promised a Messiah, a Son, a Savior that would bring them freedom and joy forever. They waited for such a long time in misery and sadness for this promised child, who would save them from their cruel Roman rulers. We can read in the books of Luke 2: 1-20 and Matthew 2: 1-12 the events of the birth of Jesus Christ. Look at the icon called “The Nativity of Christ” attached to this report.

There are so many colorful images to study in this bright icon. Right in the middle of all the action is a beautiful young mother sitting next to her newborn baby boy, both having golden halos around their heads. The baby is wrapped snugly and is lying in a straw covered manger. Two animals, a donkey, and an ox, are staring at the baby who is lying on top of their food. Baby Jesus and his mother, Mary, are in a small cave where animals were fed and kept safe. What a strange place to be born! At the top of the icon is seen the bottom of a bright star with rays shining down on the manger. It had been shining in the sky for two years before the birth of Jesus, and it caught the attention of three wise men from far away in eastern countries. Those men are in the middle of the left side of the icon. They are wearing small red hats and they have precious gifts for this baby. On top of the cave are angels. As soon as Jesus was born, one angel arrived at a group of shepherds who were watching their flocks of sheep all night. The dark night sky was immediately lit up with the bright light of the angel who spoke to