



ST. GABRIEL'S NOTES

24th December 2023



My Dear Friends,

*If you look for Me at Christmas, you won't need a special star -
I'm no longer just in Bethlehem, I'm right there where you are.*

You may not be aware of Me amid the celebrations -

You'll have to look beyond the stores and all the decorations.

But if you take a moment from your list of things to do,

And listen to your heart, you'll find I'm waiting there for you.

You're the one I want to be with, you're the reason that I came,

And you'll find me in the stillness as I'm whispering your name.

I Love you, Jesus

1223 *The Story of the Christmas Crib* 2023

Once again our beautiful Crib has been made ready to receive the Infant Jesus on Christmas Day, It is open this weekend and you can have a look while in the Church. Grateful thanks to our team of Monday Maintenance Men who have been working hard preparing it for several weeks.

2023 is an important year in the history of the Christmas Crib. According to tradition, it was in 1223, 800 years ago, that the first Nativity scene was created by St. Francis of Assisi. The only historical account we have of Francis' nativity scene comes from *The Life of St. Francis of Assisi* by St. Bonaventure, a Franciscan monk who was born five years before Francis' death.

According to Bonaventure's biography, St. Francis got permission from Pope Honourius III to set up a manger with hay and two live animals—an ox and an ass—in a cave in the Italian village of Greccio. Witness accounts from that time reported that Francis included a carved doll that cried tears of joy and "seemed to be awakened from sleep when the blessed Father Francis embraced Him in both arms." This miracle of the crying doll moved all who were present, Bonaventure writes. He also reported another miracle - The hay that the child lay in had the power to cure local cattle diseases and pestilences.

The nativity scene's popularity took off from there and spread throughout Europe. We don't know if people actually played Mary and Joseph during Francis' time, or whether they just imagined those figures' presence. Over the centuries various statues and live actors were included along with the shepherds and their animals, with the Three Wise Men coming on the 6th January.