

# Dear Padre,

**On what date was Jesus born? Was it December 25 or some time between December and April, when shepherds watched over their sheep?**

Due to the complexity of history's various calendars and ways of calculating time, we cannot be sure of the date. Matthew and Luke, the two Gospels that detail the birth of Jesus, do not give a date.

Early Christians observed an annual feast to remember Jesus' death and resurrection, focusing on the paschal mystery rather than on his birth. As Christianity grew and spread, however, Christians wanted to celebrate more events from Jesus' life. The celebration on December 25 has more to do with an expression of faith in Jesus as Emmanuel, "God with us," than with establishing the exact date of his birth.

December 25 is listed as the date of Jesus' birth in a fourth-century calendar of martyrs, but how this date was chosen is unclear. Some scholars believe Christians in Rome chose December 25 to counteract the celebration of the pagan sun god Emesa. Another theory follows the influences of the seasons: early Christians believed John the Baptist was conceived on the autumnal equinox and born at the summer solstice. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus' conception took place six months after John's. That time line would place Jesus' birth at the winter solstice, December 25 on the Julian calendar. A third theory says Jesus' birth would have occurred on the same date as his death, which we believe to be in the spring at Passover. Regardless of the exact date, we celebrate Jesus as the true Son of God who came to enlighten us and, by his death and resurrection, to give us life. ●

Fr. John Schmidt, CSSR / [DearPadre.org](http://DearPadre.org)

## Do you have a question for the Padre?

Go to [DearPadre.org](http://DearPadre.org) to send your question and to learn more about *Dear Padre*.

### MONDAY

January 8

*Baptism of the Lord*

Is 55:1-11

1 Jn 5:1-9

Mk 1:7-11

### TUESDAY

January 9

*Weekday*

1 Sm 1:9-20

Mk 1:21-28

### WEDNESDAY

January 10

*Weekday*

1 Sm 3:1-10, 19-20

Mk 1:29-39

### THURSDAY

January 11

*Weekday*

1 Sm 4:1-11

Mk 1:40-45

### FRIDAY

January 12

*Weekday*

1 Sm 8:4-7, 10-22a

Mk 2:1-12

### SATURDAY

January 13

*Weekday*

1 Sm 9:1-4, 17-19; 10:1a

Mk 2:13-17

### SUNDAY

January 14

*Second Sunday in*

*Ordinary Time*

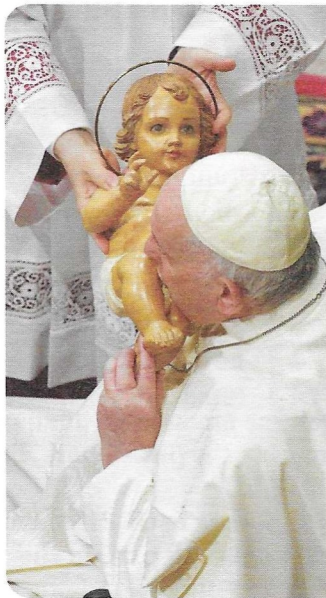
1 Sm 3:3b-10, 19

1 Cor 6:13c-15a, 17-20

Jn 1:35-42



IRAMIKONA / SHUTTERSTOCK



## A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS

*Like a rising star (see Numbers 24:17), Jesus comes to enlighten all peoples and to brighten the nights of humanity. Today, with the Magi, let us lift our eyes to heaven and ask: "Where is the child who has been born?" (Matthew 2:2). Where can we find and encounter our Lord?*

HOMILY, ROME,  
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