

*And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed. St Luke 2:4-5.*

It's a scene recreated in many a nativity play: Mary and Joseph and usually a donkey, travelling from door to door in order to secure accommodation in Bethlehem, and it's a good scene for us to recall on Christmas Eve. We might think of Joseph anxiously trying to provide for his little family and of the discomfort of Mary making a journey so late in her pregnancy. In the opening of St John's Gospel there is a reflection on the experience of Mary and Joseph's struggle to find shelter, 'He came to his own and his own people did not receive him.'

There is a point to be made here about how Jesus waits to be let into our lives. He comes, not with force or might but, as in the search of pregnant Mary for shelter, simply waiting for us to give him room. In the celebration of the Holy Eucharist it is an ancient tradition for the priest (and members of the congregation if they so wish) to strike themselves upon the chest during the general confession in the Penitential Rite at the words, 'through my fault, through my own fault, through my own most grievous fault.' That action is a sign of humble contrition and ensures that the words do not lightly trip off the tongue. It is also a reminder of the Lord who stands at the door of our hearts, waiting to be let in.

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me. Revelation 3:20.*

Christmas is almost here. Be ready to welcome him.