I. “And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem.” (St. Luke 2:4)

A. Why is it necessary that Christ be born in Bethlehem?
   1. Bethlehem is the city of the king (David). Christ, being born the foster-child of Joseph, is thus positioned both in the line of David and is born in David’s city.
   2. But, of far more significance is the name: Bethlehem. In Hebrew, the name is בֵּית לֶחֶם (Bet Lahem), which transliterates as “House of Bread”. The Arabic term for the modern city is بيت لحم (Bayt Lahm), which transliterates “House of Flesh”.
   3. Saint Gregory the Great: “It is not without a special reason that the Lord is born in Bethlehem. For the name Bethlehem signifies the ‘House of Bread’, and this is the birthplace of Him Who said: I am the living Bread, which came down from heaven (St. John 6:51). We see then that the name of Bethlehem was prophetically given to the place where Christ was born, because it was there that He was to appear in the flesh, by the eating of which the souls of the elect are fed unto life everlasting.”

B. “She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger.” (St. Luke 2:7)
   1. In the miracle of the Incarnation, God confines Himself to space and time in a human form. “God’s sign is that he makes himself small for us” (Pp. Benedict XVI, Christmas 2006 Homily).
      a) And, we can see by the adoration paid to him both from the Shepherds and the Magi that they are given recognition to the Divinity of Christ, who is now confined in a small space.
   2. Significance is given to the fact that he is laid in a manger (i.e. a feeding trough). He who is the Bread of Life is born in the House of Bread and laid in a feeding trough at his birth, wrapped in thin cloths as one would wrap a freshly-baked loaf of bread.

II. “Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.” (St. Justin Martyr, First Apology)
   1. Each celebration of the Holy Mass is a repetition of the miracle of the Incarnation.
      a) Christ the Lord, in His Real Flesh and Blood, incarnates Himself upon the altar in the Holy Eucharist — once again confining Himself to a small space, making Himself small for us.
      b) Our adoration before Him at Mass is no less real than that of the Shepherds and Magi. Just as they knelt before God-made-man in the manger, we kneel before God-made-man risen and ascended who is incarnate upon the altar to feed us, who are His creatures.
   2. In the words of the classical Latin Hymn: Ave, verum Corpus natum de Maria Virgine — Hail, true Body, born of the Virgin Mary!
   3. “What is the fact of the Eucharist? It is that the same Jesus Who was born on earth not only became man but remains man. He not only came into the world, He is in the world. In a word, He came to stay. The Eucharist is Christmas prolonged, because
faith tells us that once God became man, He decided to remain man. From all the
reaches of past eternity, God had only been God. But having once taken on human
flesh, into now the future reaches of eternity, God will always remain man. And this
God-Man is here; Bethlehem is wherever there is a Catholic Church or chapel in which
Christ is present.” (Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.)

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