OVERVIEW

[The First Christmas: What the Gospels really teach about Jesus's Birth](#) was co-written with friend and colleague John Dominic Crossan. This book describes the context of the Christmas story, the different birth narratives in Matthew and Luke, and sheds fresh light on the meaning of these stories for us today.

QUESTIONS

Possible conversations with others as you read **The First Christmas.**

- Mark is the earliest gospel written around 70 CE (Some 40 years after Jesus's death.) The earliest writing in our New Testament is 1 Thessalonians written in the 50's. Neither of them refer to Jesus's birth. One can infer that Jesus' birth was not of major importance to the earliest Christian communities. Matthew and Luke do have birth narratives. Matthew written in the 80's. Luke perhaps as late as 120. And their narratives are very different from each other. Marc and Dom write, "we see the nativity stories as neither fact nor fable, but as parables and overtures." p.27. What do they mean by that? How does this change the way you understand the purpose of these stories?

- From the preface to the book: "The stories of Jesus's birth are both personal and political. They speak of personal and political transformation. Set in their first-century context, they are comprehensive and passionate visions of another way of seeing life and of living our lives." How does this strike you? Does this understanding make the birth stories richer and more challenging? Reflect on why the stories were told this way.

- A question from the last chapter of the book, Chapter 9: *Joy to the World.* "What does it mean for *us now* to take seriously what these stories meant for *them then*?" p. 227

FEEDBACK

We welcome your feedback. Give us suggestions, comments, what was helpful, what was not, so we can provide better study guides. No suggestion is too small. What other resources would be helpful for you? We appreciate your help. We would also like to know how you used these guides, for individual study or groups?

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