

In art, images depicting the life of Jesus inspired by the New Testament gospels are grouped in *cycles* beginning with the Incarnation, the episodic narrative about Jesus' conception and birth.

The Nativity, the story of the birth of Jesus, has been a principal subject in Western art since the 4th century. Images depicting the Nativity and related stories including the Annunciation, the Adoration of the shepherds, the Adoration of the Magi, and the Flight into Egypt are based on narratives from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. *The Nativity* exhibition presents a sequential visual narrative from the Incarnation cycle.

This exhibition is made possible through the generous donation of works of art to the UWM Art Collection by the late Emile H. Mathis II.

The Annunciation

The archangel Gabriel informs the Virgin Mary that she will bear God's son. The Incarnation, Mary's miraculous conception of Jesus, occurs through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, shown usually as a dove descending on shafts of light.

The Annunciation was an especially popular subject in art during the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

Trip to Bethlehem

Mary and Joseph travel from Nazareth to his ancestral home, Bethlehem, to enroll in a tax census. This episode is rarely depicted in art.

The Nativity

According to Luke's Gospel, in Bethlehem Mary gave birth to Jesus in a stable because there was no room available. The Holy Family – Jesus, Mary and Joseph – is commonly depicted in a stable or in a cave.

The Annunciation to and Adoration of the Shepherds

An angel announces Jesus' birth to the shepherds in the field at night. The shepherds go to Bethlehem to pay homage to the infant.

The Adoration of the Magi

Three wise men, *magi*, from the East in search of a newborn king, follow a bright star to Bethlehem where they present precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the infant.

The Flight into Egypt

The Holy Family escapes to Egypt after Joseph is warned by an angel that King Herod, fearing a rival has been born, orders the massacre of male infants in Bethlehem.