Luke 2.1-21: The Birth of Jesus

Below is the Vulgate text (St. Jerome’s translation of the original Greek) of the Christmas story. Use the vocabulary in the back of Wheelock (pp. 409-442) and the notes that follow this to help you read the text. This is the full and unabridged Latin of Jerome, so you will encounter grammatical constructions we have not yet covered; these will be translated and explained in the notes that follow the text.

Factum est autem in diebus illis, exiit edictum a Caesare Augusto ut describeretur universus orbis. Haec descriptio prima est a praeside Syriae Quirino: et ibant omnes ut profiterentur singuli in suam civitatem. Ascendit autem et Ioseph a Galilaeā de civitate Nazareth in Iudaeam, in civitatem David quae vocatur Bethlehem, eo quod esset de domo et familiā David, ut profiteretur cum

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1 *Factum est:* “It happened,” lit. “It was done” [perf. pass. indic. 3s]
2 *exiit:* “there went out” [perf. act. indic. 3s]
3 *edictum:* “edict, proclamation” [nom. s. neut.]
4 *ut describeretur universus orbis:* “that the whole world be counted/censused”
5 *descriptio:* “census” [nom. s. f.; 3rd decl.]
6 *prima:* “first,” here “for the first time”
7 *praeside Syriae:* “the prefect of Syria” [abl. s. m./gen. s. f.]
8 *Quirinus:* Quirinus is a Roman name
9 *ibant:* “went”; the subject is omnes (“all people, everyone”)
10 *ut profiterentur singuli:* “in order that they be publicly registered one by one”
11 *Ascendit:* “went up,” because Bethlehem is higher in altitude than Nazareth
12 *et Joseph:* Joseph is nominative; et means “too” here
13 *Galilaeā:* Galilee [abl. s. f.]
14 *Nazareth:* ablative, in apposition to civitate
15 *Iudaeam:* Judea [acc. s. f.]
16 *David:* genitive
17 *eo quod esset:* “for this (reason) because he was . . .”
18 *David:* genitive (same as above, note 16)
19 *ut profiterentur:* “in order that they be publicly registered” (same as above)
Mariā desponsatā sibi uxore praegnante. Factum est autem, cum essent ibi, impleti sunt dies ut pareret. Et peperit filium suum primogenitum et pannīs eum involvit et reclinavit eum in praesepio quia non erat eīs locus in diversorio.

Et pastores erant in regione eādem vigilantes et custodientes vigilias noctis super gregem suum. Et ecce angelus Domini stetit iuxta illos et claritas Dei.
circumfulsit\textsuperscript{45} illos et timuerunt timore magno. Et dixit illīs angelus: Nolite\textsuperscript{46} timere: ecce\textsuperscript{47} enim evangelizo\textsuperscript{48} vobis gaudium magnum, quod erit omni populo\textsuperscript{49}: quia\textsuperscript{50} natus est\textsuperscript{51} vobis hodie Salvator\textsuperscript{52}, qui est Christus Dominus, in civitate David\textsuperscript{53}. Et hoc vobis signum\textsuperscript{54}: invenietis infantem\textsuperscript{55} pannīs\textsuperscript{56} involutum\textsuperscript{57}, et positum\textsuperscript{58} in praesepio\textsuperscript{59}. Et subito facta est\textsuperscript{60} cum angelo multitudo\textsuperscript{61} militiae caelestis\textsuperscript{62} laudantium\textsuperscript{63} Deum et dicentium\textsuperscript{64}: \\

\textsuperscript{45}circumfulsit: “shone all around” [from circumfulgeo; perf. act. indic. 3s]
\textsuperscript{46}Nolite: “Don’t” (+ infinitive), lit. “Be unwilling (to . . .)”; a polite way of making a command
\textsuperscript{47}see above (note 41)
\textsuperscript{48}evangelizo: “I announce,” lit, “I bring good news (of . . .)”; a direct borrowing of the verb used in the Greek original text (eu- “good” + -angel- “report” + -izo “I”)
\textsuperscript{49}quod erit omni populo: “which all people will have (i.e. share in),” lit. “which will be to all people,” cf. above, non erat ēis locus
\textsuperscript{50}quia: see above (note 33)
\textsuperscript{51}natus est: “there has been born”
\textsuperscript{52}Salvator: “the Savior”
\textsuperscript{53}David: see above (note 16)
\textsuperscript{54}hoc (erit) vobis signum: cf. above, non erat ēis locus
\textsuperscript{55}infantem: “baby” [acc. s. m.]
\textsuperscript{56}pannīs: see above (note 29)
\textsuperscript{57}involutum: “(having been) wrapped in” [acc. s. m.]
\textsuperscript{58}positum: “(having been) placed” [acc. s. m.]
\textsuperscript{59}praesepio: see above (note 32)
\textsuperscript{60}facta est: “there arose, there appeared”
\textsuperscript{61}multitudo: abstract quality of multus, i.e. “the state of being multus”; here, a “multitude” [nom. s. f.; 3rd decl.]
\textsuperscript{62}militiae caelestis: “the heavenly host,” lit. “the celestial army” [gen. s. f.]
\textsuperscript{63}laudantium: “praising,” refers to the heavenly host
\textsuperscript{64}dicentium: “saying,” refers to the heavenly host
Gloria in altissimīs Deus,

Et in terrā pax in hominibus bonae voluntatis.

Et factum est, ut discesserunt ab eīs angeli in caelum, pastores loquebantur ad invicem: “Transeamus usque Bethlehem, et videamus hoc verbum quod factum est, quod Dominus ostendit nobis.” Et venerunt festinantes et invenerunt Mariam et Ioseph et infantem posītum in praesepio. Videntes autem cognoverunt de verbo quod dictum erat illīs de puero hoc. Et omnes qui audierunt mirati sunt, et de

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65 in altissimīs: “in the highest (things)” [substantive; abl. pl. neut.]
66 bonae voluntatis: “of good will,” genitive of description referring to hominibus; the inferior Greek variant εὐδοκία (eudokia; nom. s. f.) is the origin of the familiar but undoubtedly less likely to be correct ‘and good will towards men’.
67 Et factum est, ut discesserunt: “And (so) it happened that they departed”; the subject (“they”) is angeli mentioned after ab eīs [from discedo, -ere, discessi, discessum; perf. act. indic. 3pl]
68 pastores: see above (note 36)
69 loquebantur: “said” [3pl]
70 ad invicem: “to each other,” lit. “in turn”; i.e. not just one shepherd said the following speech
71 Transeamus: “Let’s go”
72 usque: “to” + acc.
73 Bethlehem: here, acc.
74 videamus: “let’s see”
75 verbum: “report,” lit. “word”; i.e. what the angel said
76 festinantes: “in a hurry,” lit. “hurrying”
77 Ioseph: here, acc.
78 infantem posītum in praesepio: see above (notes 55, 58, 59)
79 Videntes: “Seeing (the baby)”
80 cognoverunt: here, “they made known, broadcast, went public,” though the usual meaning of cognosco is “learn, recognize”
81 audierunt: = audīverunt [from audio; perf. act. indic. 3pl]
82 mirati sunt: “were amazed,” hinting at the public’s general disbelief in the miraculous
his quae dicta erant a pastoribus ad ipsos. Maria autem conservabat omnia verba haec, conferens in corde suo. Et reversi sunt pastores glorificantes et laudantes Deum in omnibus quae audierant et viderant, sicut dictum est ad illos.

Et postquam consummati sunt dies octo, ut circumcideretur, vocatum est nomen eius Iesus, quod vocatum est ab angelo priusquam in utero conciperetur.

birth-story, as does also the subsequent et (“even when they heard for themselves these things from the shepherds,” n.b. Jerome has added the et which has no equivalent in the Greek original), all in a clear attempt to explain why the story was not more widely known prior to the publication of the Book of Luke, n.b. no other gospel includes this story.

ipsos: i.e. the people who heard about the angels and the birth of Jesus from the shepherds

conservabat: here, “kept to herself,” another attempt to explain why this story was not more widely known: Mary for some reason did not tell the story to anyone but kept it to herself

conferens: “discussing (them), debating (them),” lit. “bearing (them) with her”; the King James version says “pondering”

reversi sunt: “they returned”; i.e. the shepherds went back to their fields

pastores: see above (note 36)

glorificantes: “glorifying” [nom. pl. m.]

laudantes: “praising” [nom. pl. m.]

audierant: = audiverant

ad illos: = illīs

consummati sunt: from consummo (I), “complete”

octo: “eight” [nom. pl. m.]

ut circumcideretur: “in order that he (i.e. Jesus) be circumcised,” i.e. they waited for eight days before circumcising and naming Jesus because Mary needed to be purified after giving birth

priusquam: “before”

utero: “womb” [from uterus; abl. s. m.]

conciperetur: “he was conceived”