

Matthew: 2:13–23

From Catena Aurea:

13. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.

14. When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15. And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son.

HILARY. The first time when he would teach Joseph that she was lawfully espoused, the Angel called the Virgin his espoused wife; but after the birth she is only spoken of as the Mother of Jesus. As wedlock was rightfully imputed to her in her virginity, so virginity is esteemed venerable in her as the mother of Jesus.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. 218. App.) Hear the sacrament of a great mystery. Moses before had shut up the light of day from the traitors the Egyptians; Christ by going down thither brought back light to them that sate in darkness. He fled that he might enlighten them, not that he might escape his foes.

AUGUSTINE. The miserable tyrant supposed that by the Saviour's coming he should be thrust from his royal throne. But it was not so; Christ came not to hurt others' dignity, but to bestow His own on others.

HILARY. Egypt full of idols; for after this enquiry for Him among the Jews, Christ leaving Judæa goes to be cherished among nations given to the vainest superstitions.

JEROME. When he takes the Child and His mother to go into Egypt, it is in the night and darkness, when to return into Judæa, the Gospel speaks of no light, no darkness.

CHRYSOSTOM. See how immediately on His birth the tyrant is furious against Him, and the mother with her Child is driven into foreign lands. So should you in the beginning of your spiritual career seem to have tribulation, you need not to be discouraged, but bear all things manfully, having this example.

JEROME. (Epist. 57.7.) This is not in the LXX; but in Osee according to the genuine Hebrew text we read; Israel is my child, and I have loved him, and, from Egypt have I called my Son; where the LXX render, Israel is my child, and I have loved him, and called my sons out of Egypt.

JEROME. (In Osee 11:2.) The Evangelist cites this text, because it refers to Christ typically. For it is to be observed, that in this Prophet and in others, the coming of Christ and the call of the Gentiles are foreshewn in such a manner, that the thread of history is never broken.

CHRYSOSTOM. It is a law of prophecy, that in a thousand places many things are said of some and fulfilled of others. As it is said of Simeon and Levi, I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel; (Gen. 49:7.) which was fulfilled not in themselves, but in their descendants. So here Christ is by nature the Son of God, and so the prophecy is fulfilled in Him.

JEROME. Let those who deny the authenticity of the Hebrew copies, shew us this passage in the LXX, and when they have failed to find it, we will shew it them in the Hebrew. We may also explain it in another way, by considering it as quoted from Numbers, God brought him out of Egypt; his glory is as it were that of a unicorn. (Num. 23:22.)

2:16

16. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

AUGUSTINE. (non occ.) And while he thus persecutes Christ, he furnished an army (of martyrs) clothed in white robes of the same age as the Lord.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. 220. App.) Behold how this unrighteous enemy never could have so much profited these infants by his love, as he did by his hate; for as much as iniquity abounded against them, so much did the grace of blessing abound on them.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. 373. 3.) O blessed infants! He only will doubt of your crown in this your passion for Christ, who doubts that the baptism of Christ has a benefit for infants. He who at His birth had Angels to proclaim Him, the heavens to testify, and Magi to worship Him, could surely have prevented that these should not have died for Him, had He not known that they died not in that death, but rather lived in higher

bliss. Far be the thought, that Christ who came to set men free, did nothing to reward those who died in His behalf, when hanging on the cross He prayed for those who put Him to death.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. 132. App.) The Magi had seen this unknown star in the heavens, not a few days, but two years before, as they had informed Herod when he enquired. This caused him to fix two years old and under; as it follows, according to the time he had enquired of the Magi.

AUGUSTINE. (Gloss. ord.) Or because he feared that the Child to whom even stars ministered, might transform His appearance to greater or under that of His own age, or might conceal all those of that age: hence it seems to be that he slew all from one day to two years old.

AUGUSTINE. (de Cons. Ev. ii. 11.) Or, disturbed by pressure of still more imminent dangers, Herod's thoughts are drawn to other thoughts than the slaughter of children, he might suppose that the Magi, unable to find Him whom they had supposed born, were ashamed to return to him. So the days of purification being accomplished, they might go up in safety to Jerusalem. And who does not see that that one day they may have escaped the attention of a King occupied with so many cares, and that afterwards when the things done in the Temple came to be spread abroad, then Herod discovered that he had been deceived by the Magi, and then sent and slew the children.

2:17–18

17. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

18. In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. ix.) The Evangelist by this history of so bloody a massacre, having filled the reader with horror, now again soothes his feelings, shewing that these things were not done because God could not hinder, or knew not of them; but as the Prophet had foretold.

JEROME. (In Hierem. 31:15.) This passage of Jeremiah has been quoted by Matthew neither according to the Hebrew nor the LXX version. This shews that the Evangelists and Apostles did not follow any one's translation, but according to the Hebrew manner expressed in their own words what they had read in Hebrew.

JEROME. By Ramah we need not suppose that the town of that name near Gibeah is meant; but take it as signifying 'high.' A voice was heard 'aloft,' that is, spread far and wide.'

JEROME. Rachel's son was Benjamin, in which tribe Bethlehem is not situated. How then does Rachel weep for the children of Judah as if they were her own? We answer briefly. She was buried near Bethlehem in Ephrata, and was regarded as the mother, because her body was there entertained. Or, as the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin were contiguous, and Herod's command extended to the coasts of Bethlehem as well as to the town itself, we may suppose that many were slain in Benjamin.

JEROME. This may be understood in two ways; either she thought them dead for all eternity, so that no consolation could comfort her; or, she desired not to receive any comfort for those who she knew had gone into life eternal.

HILARY. It could not be that they were not who seemed now dead, but by glorious martyrdom they were advanced to eternal life; and consolation is for those who have suffered loss, not for those who have reaped a gain. Rachel affords a type of the Church long barren now at length fruitful. She is heard weeping for her children, not because she mourned them dead, but because they were slaughtered by those whom she would have retained as her first-born sons.

GLOSS. (ord.) She will not be comforted in this present life, for that they are not, but transfers all her hope and comfort to the life to come.

2:19–20

19. But when Herod was dead, behold, an Angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

20. Saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young Child's life.

JEROME. Many here err from ignorance of history, supposing the Herod who mocked our Lord on the day of His passion, and the Herod whose death is here related, were the same. But the Herod who was then made friends with Pilate was son of this Herod and brother to Archelaus; for Archelaus was banished to Lyons in Gaul, and his father Herod made king in his room, as we read in Josephus.

JEROME. From this we see that not Herod only, but also the Priests and Scribes had sought the Lord's death at that time.

2:21–23

21. And he arose, and took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judæa in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

23. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

GLOSS. Joseph was not disobedient to the angelic warning, but he arose, and took the young Child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. The Angel had not fixed the particular place, so that while Joseph hesitates, the Angel returns, and by the often visiting him confirms his obedience.

JOSEPHUS (*Editor Comment: Jewish Historian*). Herod had nine wives, by seven of whom he had a numerous issue. By Josida, his first born Antipater—by Mariamine, Alexander and Aristobulus—by Mathuca, a Samaritan woman, Archelaus—by Cleopatra of Jerusalem, Herod, who was afterwards tetrarch, and Philip. The three first were put to death by Herod; and after his death, Archelaus seized the throne by occasion of his father's will, and the question of the succession was carried before Augustus Cæsar. After some delay, he made a distribution of the whole of Herod's dominions in accordance with the Senate's advice. To Archelaus he assigned one half, consisting of Idumæa and Judæa, with the title of tetrarch, and a promise of that of king if he shewed himself deserving of it. The rest he divided into two tetrarchates, giving Galilee to Herod the tetrarch, Ituræa and Trachonitis to Philip. Thus Archelaus was after his father's death a duarch, which kind of sovereignty is here called a kingdom.

AUGUSTINE. (De Con. Evan. ii. 10.) Here it may be asked, How then could his parents go up every year of Christ's childhood to Jerusalem, as Luke relates, if fear of Archelaus now prevented them from approaching it? This difficulty is easily solved. At the festival they might escape notice in the crowd, and by returning soon, where in ordinary times they might be afraid to live. So they neither became irreligious by neglecting the festival, nor notorious by dwelling continually in Jerusalem. Or it is open to us to understand Luke when he says, they went up every year, as speaking of a time when they had nothing to fear from Archelaus, who, as Josephus relates, reigned only nine years. There is yet a difficulty in what follows; Being warned in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee. If Joseph was afraid to go into Judæa because one of Herod's sons, Archelaus, reigned there, how could he go into Galilee, where another of his sons Herod was tetrarch, as Luke tells us? As if the times of which Luke is speaking were times in which there was any longer need to fear for the Child, when even in Judæa things were so changed, that Archelaus no longer ruled there, but Pilate was governor.

GLOSS. (ord.) But then we might ask, why was he not afraid to go into Galilee, seeing Archelaus ruled there also? He could be better concealed in Nazareth than in Jerusalem, which was the capital of the kingdom, and where Archelaus was constantly resident.

CHRYSOSTOM. And when he had once left the country of His birth, all the occurrences passed out of mind; the rage of persecution had been spent in Bethlehem and its neighbourhood. By choosing Nazareth therefore, Joseph both avoided danger, and returned to his country.

AUGUSTINE. (De Con. Evan. ii. 9.) This may perhaps occur to some, that Matthew says His parents went with the Child Jesus to Galilee because they feared Archelaus, when it should seem most probable that they chose Galilee because Nazareth was their own city, as Luke has not forgot to mention. We must understand, that when the Angel in the vision in Egypt said to Joseph, Go into the land of Israel, Joseph understood the command to be that he should go straight into Judæa, that being properly the land of Israel. But finding Archelaus ruling there, he would not court the danger, as the land of Israel might be interpreted to extend to Galilee, which was inhabited by children of Israel. Or we may suppose His parents supposed that Christ should dwell no where but in Jerusalem, where was the temple of the Lord, and would have gone thither had not the fear of Archelaus hindered them. And they had not been commanded from God to dwell positively in Judæa, or Jerusalem, so as that they should have despised the fear of Archelaus, but only in the land of Israel generally, which they might understand of Galilee.

HILARY. But the figurative interpretation holds good any way. Joseph represents the Apostles, to whom Christ is entrusted to be borne about. These, as though Herod were dead, that is, his people being destroyed in the Lord's passion, are commanded to preach the Gospel to the Jews; they are sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But finding the seed of their hereditary unbelief still abiding, they fear and withdraw; admonished by a vision, to wit, seeing the Holy Ghost poured upon the Gentiles, they carry Christ to them.

GLOSS. To this he adds the Prophet's testimony, saying, That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophets, &c.

JEROME. Had he meant to quote a particular text, he would not have written 'Prophets,' but 'the Prophet.' By thus using the plural he evidently does not take the words of any one passage in Scripture, but the sense of the whole. Nazarene is interpreted 'Holyd,' and that the Lord would be Holy, all Scripture testifies. Otherwise we may explain that it is found in Isaiah (c. 11:1.) rendered to the strict letter of the Hebrew. There shall come a Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Nazarene shall grow out of His rootse.

AUGUSTINE. (De Con. Evan. ii. 5.) The whole of this history, from the account of the Magi inclusively, Luke omits. Let it be here noticed once for all, that each of the Evangelists writes as if he were giving a full and complete history, which omits nothing; where he really passes over any thing, he continues his thread of history as if he had told all. Yet by a diligent comparison of their several narratives, we can be at no loss to know where to insert any particular that is mentioned by one and not by the other.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

2:13 The Holy Family Flees to Egypt

Babylon and Egypt.

Chrysostom: But why was the Christ child sent into Egypt? The text makes this clear: he was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." From that point onward we see that the hope of salvation would be proclaimed to the whole world. Babylon and Egypt represent the whole world. Even when they were engulfed in ungodliness, God signified that he intended to correct and amend both Babylon and Egypt. God wanted humanity to expect his bounteous gifts the world over. So he called from Babylon the wise men and sent to Egypt the holy family.

Besides what I have said, there is another lesson also to be learned, which tends powerfully toward true self-constraint in us. We are warned from the beginning to look out for temptations and plots. And we see this even when he came in swaddling clothes. Thus you see even at his birth a tyrant raging, a flight ensuing and a departure beyond the border. For it was because of no crime that his family was exiled into the land of Egypt.

Similarly, you yourself need not be troubled if you are suffering countless dangers. Do not expect to be celebrated or crowned promptly for your troubles. Instead you may keep in mind the long-suffering example of the mother of the Child, bearing all things nobly, knowing that such a fugitive life is consistent with the ordering of spiritual things. You are sharing the kind of labor Mary herself shared. So did the magi. They both were willing to retire secretly in the humiliating role of fugitive. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 8.2.

Why Christ Fleed.

Peter Chrysologus: His flight then was not occasioned by fear but by what had come through the mystery of prophecy. The Evangelist planted the seed when he thus spoke: "Take the boy and his mother and flee into Egypt." And later, "that what was written might be fulfilled: 'From Egypt have I summoned my son.'" Christ fled so that he might establish the truth of the law, faith in prophecy and the testimony of the psalter. The Lord himself says, "It was needful that what was written in the law and the prophets and the psalms be fulfilled by me." Christ fled for us, not for himself. Christ fled so that at the right time he might serve as a steward of the sacraments [the divine mysteries]. Christ fled so that by granting absolution he might take away the source of abuses to come and that he might give proof of faith to those who would believe. And finally, Christ fled so that he might bestow on us faith even when we have to flee, because in the face of persecution it is better to flee than to deny the faith. For Peter, because he was unwilling to flee, denied the Lord. John, lest he deny the Lord, fled. Sermons 150.11.

The Devil Foresaw the Future of Christ.

Peter Chrysologus: Was it Herod seeking the child, or the devil working through Herod? When Herod saw the magi for himself, he imagined in his fantasy that they had fled their governors. For Christ, though bound in swaddling clothes, though busy at his mother's breast, though keeping quiet, concealing his words, unable to walk, nevertheless transformed the magi (who had been standard-bearers of the devil) into his most faithful servants. The devil instantly realized what Christ could do when he came of age. So he spurred the Jews against him and, clever contriver that he was, impelled Herod that he might get the jump on Christ in his infancy. He hoped to deprive him of the coming emblem of his virtue, the cross, the banner of the greatest victory for us. The devil perceived that Christ would soon be restoring life to all the world with his teaching and his virtue. Even while still whimpering as a baby, Jesus was taking possession of this world from top to bottom. It was as the prophet said: "Before the child knows to cry to his father and mother he shall take the pride of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria." The Jews themselves attest to this when they say, "You see how the whole world hastens after him." Sermons 150.9.

2:14 Egypt Receives the Christ Child

While Palestine Plots, Egypt Receives.

Chrysostom: Mary, who had never even passed beyond the threshold of her own house, was commanded to undergo this long ordeal of adversity for the sake of this wonderful birth and for her own spiritual labor and development. Isn't this remarkable: While Palestine plots, it is Egypt that receives and preserves the One for whom the plots are designed! This is reminiscent of the patriarch Jacob, who also sought succor in Egypt, anticipating the coming of our Lord. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 8.2.

As a Man Christ Would Not Flee Death.

Peter Chrysologus: Christ promised that he would come incarnate, that he would go through the phases of life, that he would announce the glory of the kingdom of heaven, that he would proclaim the way of faith and that by the power of his word alone he would put demons to flight. He promised that he would give sight to the blind, gait to the lame, speech to the mute, hearing to the deaf, remission for sinners and life to the dead. All these things he promised through the law and the prophets. Thus it was that Christ, when he was to become a man, was not to flee the death he escaped as an infant. Sermons 150.10.

2:15 A Son Out of Egypt

Fugitives East and West.

Chrysostom: There is something else here worth noticing, one touching the magi and the other touching the Child. The issue is why didn't the magi remain with the Child? And why didn't the Child remain in Bethlehem? Both had to escape as fugitives shortly after they were received with joy: the magi to Persia and the holy family to Egypt. Why? This is worthy of close examination. The magnificence of God's plan of salvation would not have been believed if he had not come in the flesh. If Jesus had fallen into the hands of Herod, his life in the flesh might have been cut off. Many circumstances were quietly ordered providentially within human history. Even while the flesh of the Christ child was in danger, some dared to imagine that he never assumed our common human flesh, that his coming was like that of a ghost. These impious ideas will ultimately destroy those who do not confess that God has come to us in the flesh in a way becoming to his deity.

As to the wise men, they were sent off quickly, commissioned to teach in the land of the Persians, having thwarted the madness of the king. Herod was allowed the opportunity to learn that he was attempting things impossible, against prophecy, and that there was still time to quench his wrath and desist from his demented plot. It is fitting to God's power not only to subdue his enemies but to do so with ease, deceiving the deceivers in a way fitting to God's almighty power. In the same way the Egyptians had earlier been deceived, their wealth transferred secretly and with craft and God's power made awesome to them. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 8.1.

Egypt the Abode of Christ.

Chromatius: Joseph therefore was commanded to accept this boy about whom Isaiah had said, "For a boy has been born to you; a son has been given to you, whose rule has extended over his shoulders." Now he said "a son has been given to you" because Christ the Lord was born as a boy and was counted a son of Joseph and Mary. As to his going down into Egypt, Isaiah predicted this long before the fact when he said, "Behold, the Lord sits atop a swift cloud and will come into Egypt." By this statement the promise of the Lord's incarnation was clearly revealed. Since the Lord himself is invoked as "arising from on high, the sunlight of justice," it is right that he would come on a swift cloud. By this Isaiah means he would come in a hallowed body, a body weighed down by no sin and through which he covered the light of his own majesty with the envelope of the cloud of his body. Hosea as well points to this very fact when he says, "The king of Israel has been thrown down. Because Israel was small, I took delight in him. And I called my son from Egypt."

After Egypt's ancient, grave sin, after many blows had been divinely inflicted upon it, God the omnipotent Father, moved by devotion, sent his Son into Egypt. He did so that Egypt, which had long ago paid back the penalty of wickedness owed under Moses, might now receive Christ, the hope for salvation. How great was God's compassion as shown in the advent of his Son! Egypt, which of old under Pharaoh stood stubborn against God, now became a witness to and home for Christ. God's compassion toward Egypt was like that shown toward the magi, who deserved to know Christ the Lord. For, although the magi had for a long time dared resist the divine goodness under Moses, they now, having seen but a single star in heaven, believed in the Son of God. The cavalier magicians were handed over to punishment for their lack of faith. Others were brought to glory through faith, since they believed that God had been born in the flesh—God whom the Egyptian magicians were unwilling to recognize in all his divine excellence. Tractate on Matthew 6.1.

2:16 Herod Slaughters the Infants in Bethlehem

The Lord's Safekeeping Prophetically Foretold.

Chromatius: For Herod, as we have said, in his desire to destroy the Savior of the world, sent word to Bethlehem and commanded that all children two years of age and under be killed, figuring the age according to the time that he had learned from the magi. He thought that his edict would reach even to the Lord himself, the source of life. The Holy Spirit had already foreseen his wickedness beforehand. Solomon, speaking for the church, had said, "Who will give to you my brother, the one who nurses at the breast of his mother?" Moreover, by saying, "Who will give to you?" he was demonstrating that Herod would have no power over him who is the Lord and Prince of all powers. Thus the Lord spoke rightly when he bore witness about himself through the same Solomon: "Evil men will seek and not find me. For they hate wisdom and moreover have not partaken of the Word of God and have had no desire for it." The Spirit also said through David: "Since you are the one who gave birth to me, you are my hope, my mother, from the time I nursed at your breast ... you are my protector." The blessed Moses also relates that Christ the Lord, an infant, could not have been killed while still nursing. He gave witness to this with his words, "You will not cook a lamb in the milk of its own mother." In this exact statement Moses revealed the expectation that Christ our Lord would be the true Lamb of God who was to suffer at the appointed time. Tractate on Matthew 6.2.

Whether Christ Abandoned the Little Soldiers.

Peter Chrysologus: Why did Christ do this? Christ is the judge of thoughts and the examiner of minds. Why did he desert those whom he knew were being sought because of himself and whom he knew would be killed for his sake? He was born a king, the king of heaven—why did he neglect the standard-bearers of his own innocence? Why did he disdain an army of the same age as himself? Why did he thus abandon those who were cut down as plunder from the same cradle as himself? Was it so that he, who would become the one king, might proceed against the forces of all his enemies? Brothers, Christ did not despise his own soldiers but promoted them and granted that they might walk in victory before they lived. He enabled them to participate in a victory without struggle. He gave to them the gift of the crown even before their bodies had grown. It was Christ's will that they pass over vice for virtue, attain heaven before earth and share in the divine life immediately. Thus it was that Christ sent his soldiers ahead. He did not abandon them. He gathered up his ranks. He did not leave them behind. Sermons 152.7.

The First Martyrs of Christ.

Chromatius: In Bethlehem therefore all the babies were slain. These innocents who died then on Christ's behalf became the first martyrs of Christ. David refers to them when he says, "From the mouths of nursing babies you have perfected praise because of your enemies, that you might bring ruin to the enemy." ... For in this persecution even tiny infants and nursing babies were killed on Christ's behalf and attained to the consummate praise of martyrs. Meanwhile the wicked king Herod was destroyed, he who had usurped the realm to defend himself against the king of the heavens. Thus it is that those blessed babes have deservedly lasted beyond others. They were the first who were worthy to die on Christ's behalf. Tractate on Matthew 6.2.

2:17–18 Wailing in Ramah

2:19 After Herod Died

How Joseph Prefigured the Apostolate.

Hilary: After the death of Herod, Joseph was advised by the angel to return to Judea with the boy and his mother. When he returned he heard that Archelaus, son of Herod, was king. So he was afraid to go, but the angel admonished him to cross over into the region of Galilee, and they lived in the city of Nazareth... Joseph resembles the apostles to whom Christ entrusted the spreading of the news about him. Similar to what happened with Joseph after the death of Herod, they must deal with the same people who caused the Lord to suffer. The apostles are commanded to preach to the Jews, for they were sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But when they saw that the power remained in the hands of inherited faithlessness, they became afraid and retreated. On Matthew 2.1.

2:20–21 Returning to Israel

2:22 Withdrawing to Galilee

In Place of His Father Herod.

Chrysostom: Do you perceive the alternation between relief and danger? Joseph left foreign territory and returned to his ancestral land, discovering the slaughter of the children in the process. Having left his

household in Bethlehem, he again discovers remnants of his first dangers. He finds that the son of the tyrant is alive and ruling as king. And how was it possible that Archelaus should be king of Judea, when Pontius Pilate was in charge? Herod's death had recently occurred, and the kingdom had not yet been divided. But no sooner had Herod died than his son took power in his father's place.... But if Joseph had feared to make his way to Judea, they say, on account of Archelaus, he ought to have been equally wary of Galilee on account of Herod Antipas. But let us leave unexamined for now the rest of the question as to whether he changed his place of residence, for his every impulse led away from Bethlehem and its confines. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 9.4.

Joseph Withdrew to Galilee.

Chrysostom: After the slaughter of the children occurred, the young Archelaus was under the impression that everything else had been taken care of. Both the children in Bethlehem had been eliminated and the one they were seeking to kill. But once he saw how his father had lost his life, Archelaus became most conscious of the precedent and much more diligent in contending with lawlessness. Therefore Joseph left Judea for Nazareth, both in flight from the danger and at the same time out of love for his home country. And that he might be more confident, he received a divine pronouncement from the messenger about it. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 9.4.

2:23 Living in Nazareth

The Sense of Prophetic Scriptures Summarized.

Jerome: If this could have been found in the Scriptures, he never would have said, "Because it has been spoken by the prophets," but he would rather have spoken more plainly: "Because it has been spoken by a prophet." As it is now, in speaking of prophets in general he has shown that he has not taken the specific words but rather the sense from the Scriptures. "Nazarene" is understood as "holy." Every Scripture attests that the Lord was to be holy. We can also speak in another way of what was written ... in Hebrew in Isaiah: "A branch will blossom from the root of Jesse, a Nazarene from his root." Commentary on Matthew 1.2.23.

Why a Nazarene?

Chromatius: Our Lord and Savior is called “the Nazarene” as much after the name of the place, the city of Nazareth, as from the mystery of the law. For, according to the law, those are called Nazarenes who make an extraordinary vow of chastity to God, maintaining that vow with the hair of their heads, which the ordained law had commanded them to offer as a sacrifice. Therefore, because the author and ruler of every act of sanctity and piety is Christ the Lord, who said through the prophet, “Let them be holy, since I am holy, says the Lord,” it was not undeservedly that he was called “the Nazarene.” It was he who, following truly what was preordained in the law, offered as a pledge to God the Father the sacrifice of his own body. David spoke about this pledge when he said of the Lord, “Just as Jacob swore an oath to the Lord, he was offered a pledge to God.” The Lord would show himself as the Nazarene at the time when he became a creature of flesh. Tractate on Matthew 7.2.

Blooming in Holiness.

Cyril of Alexandria: But if “the Nazarene” is interpreted to mean “holy” or, according to some, as “flower,” this is the designation found in many instances. For Daniel calls him “holy” or “of the holy ones.” Likewise we find in Isaiah: “A branch from the stock of Jesse and its flower.” Even the Lord says of himself in the Song of Songs, “I am the bloom of the plain, the lily of the valleys.” Fragment 16.