



**The Lives of Jesus and Mary Illustrated by Giotto:
Sacred Images from the Arena Chapel with
Selections from the Holy Scriptures and Ancient
Christian Apocrypha**

John P. Joy

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"The Lives of Jesus and Mary Illustrated by Giotto" is the second in a series of books designed to celebrate the greatest artistic masterpieces of the high medieval period while also bringing to life the story of Jesus Christ and His Mother Mary. This volume highlights the forty frescos depicting scenes from the lives of Jesus and Mary completed by Giotto in 1305 on the walls of the Scrovegni Chapel (also known as the Arena Chapel), in Florence, Italy. The Arena Chapel cycle begins with the story of Joachim and Anna, the parents of the Blessed Virgin, and includes scenes from her childhood before continuing with scenes from the Gospel beginning with the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, and more. From the childhood of Christ to His public ministry; from His passion to His resurrection and ascension; the cycle concludes with an impressive depiction of the Final Judgment which likely served as an inspiration for Dante's Divine Comedy. Each large, full-color image is paired with the text that tells the story illustrated by the painting. For most of the paintings, this is a text drawn directly from the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, or the Apocalypse of Saint John. One of the most extraordinary features of the book is found in the texts corresponding to the first twelve paintings, which tell the story of Saints Joachim and Anna and the childhood of Mary. These are drawn from the non-canonical text of the so-called Infancy Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, which dates from the seventh century. Although not the inspired Word of God, these texts do reflect ancient Christian traditions concerning the beginning of Mary's life. Not as well known now as they were in Giotto's time, their discovery will be a delight for modern readers.

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