

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a celebration of the birth of a historical figure, Mary, the Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Mary's birthday is itself a profound reminder of God's faithful and mysterious providence. Mary's birth, quiet and hidden from the eyes of the world, is a key part of the great unfolding of salvation history. In her, we see the convergence of divine promises and human cooperation, of grace, and humble obedience. The readings from Romans 8:28-30 and Matthew 1:1-16, 18-23 bring this mystery to light and invite us to reflect on how "all things work for good for those who love God."

All Things Work for Good for Those Who Love God

In Paul's letter to the Romans, we are assured that nothing in our lives is wasted when we live in love and faithfulness to God. St Paul assures us of this in the following words, "*We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.*" This is not a naive optimism or blind positivity. It is a deep trust that even through the chaos, the suffering, the confusion, and the hiddenness of our lives, God is at work, bringing all things together to his divine purpose.

We see this truth vividly illustrated in the genealogy and infancy narrative in the Gospel of Matthew. At first glance, the long list of names may seem tedious. Yet within that list is a testimony to God's unfailing work through generations of flawed, sinful, and sometimes forgotten people. Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon, and even figures like Rahab and Ruth. These are people who lived like us; none of them perfect, and yet each chosen, each instrumental in bringing about the fullness of time. Jesus' birth stands at the end of this long line, a moment prepared from the very beginning.

Through these generations, God was preparing the vessel through which His Son would take on flesh. The Gospel culminates in the angel's words to Joseph, citing the prophecy from Isaiah, "*Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means God is with us.*"

Mary's Birth as a Dawn of Hope

The Fulfilment of God's promise in Mary is the ultimate "good" for which all things work for in the life of those who believe and trust in God's providence. The Word became flesh not in spite of human weakness, but through it. Mary's humble yes, her quiet obedience, became the gateway for Emmanuel to enter our world. Her nativity marks the dawn of hope. As we know, this hope was not without suffering. Tradition tells us that Mary's parents, Joachim and Anne, experienced long years of barrenness and disappointment. Yet even in their waiting, God was preparing something sacred. Their suffering became a seedbed of grace. In Mary's own life too, sorrow and glory were intertwined. From the moment of her birth, her life pointed toward a greater purpose; not her own glory, but the fulfilment of God's promise to dwell among His people.

This feast invites us to reflect on the hidden ways God is working in our lives. Like Mary, we are often unaware of how our daily choices, our fidelity, our quiet sacrifices, are part of a much greater story. We may not understand how our present circumstances — especially those marked by suffering or confusion — could ever lead to good. Yet Scripture reminds us that God is faithful. He sees the full picture. And when we love Him, even the most fragmented parts of our lives are not wasted. They are transformed.

Celebrating Mary's Birthday

Finally, in celebrating the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we celebrate the beginning of a life completely open to God's will. Her birth signals a turning point in salvation history. It's a moment of quiet joy that would blossom into the loud cry of a newborn in Bethlehem. And, ultimately into the victory of the cross and resurrection. Mary's life, from her hidden birth to her glorious Assumption, is proof that God indeed works all things for good for those who love Him. May her life inspire us to trust in God's providence, even when we cannot see the full picture. And may we, like Mary, become instruments through which Emmanuel is revealed to the world.

Happy Birthday Mother Mary!

[see Readings: Micah 5:1-4a; Matthew 1:1-16, 18-23]

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Mystery of the Incarnation

In celebrating Our Lady's Nativity, we anticipate our own preparation for her Son's birth in Advent.

One of the ancient apocryphal narratives concerning the birth of Our Lady includes the following dialogue: St. Anne asks the midwife: "What have I brought forth?" "A girl!" replies the midwife. (The beginning of the Good News is: "It's a girl!") And Anne responds—in an interesting twist on the *Magnificat*— "The Word has magnified my soul!" On 8 September, the whole Christian world joins St. Anne's exclamation of gratitude. The tiny, newborn Mary ushers joy into this world of sadness.

In the Christian dispensation, the birth of a girl marks the beginning of salvation. The long wait is over: the Mother of the Messiah is born, and all creation sings its heart out. Now it is only a matter of time before the Savior himself will be born of this chosen maiden, the "glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, the honor of our people." Already, the darkness begins to lift and hope wells up, like the flower that buds forth from the root of Jesse. The celebration of Mary's birth anticipates Advent. It reminds us of the careful preparation of a covenant people. It points us back towards our Savior's family tree.

The dawn of the sun

Mary is now on the scene, and the last stages of preparation have begun. She is the dawn that heralds the coming of the Sun of Justice, the Morning Star that rises with the promise of a new Day. With the birth of a girl child, God has made ready an earthly dwelling-place for his Son. The birth of the Mother is the indispensable prelude to the birth of the Son, as the lovely hymn proclaims, "*Mary the Dawn, Christ the perfect Day; Mary the Gate, Christ the heavenly Way.*"

From birth to birth

We celebrate our Blessed Lady's birthday, 8 September, in keeping with a tradition that goes back to 5th-century Jerusalem. The feast is associated with a pilgrimage site, a spot in the Old City remembered as the home of Joachim and Anne, and therefore Mary's birthplace, near St. Stephen's Gate (or the Lion Gate) and the pool of Bethesda. Pilgrims today can still descend into the crypt beneath the beautiful Crusader Church of St. Anne, pray in the little chapel, and venerate there an icon depicting Mary's nativity. Such an act of devotion is the obvious counterpart to a visit to a crypt in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem where the Virgin herself gave birth to the Savior of the world. His birth is forever linked with her birth.

"*In the fullness of time,*" St. Paul writes, "*God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law*" (Gal 4:4). The symbol of the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) puts it this way: "*Begotten from the Father before the ages as to his divinity, [Our Lord] in these days, for us and for our salvation, was born to his humanity of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God.*" St. Leo the Great delighted in the paradox: Christ is consubstantial with his Father and consubstantial with his Mother!

The fulfilment of God's plan

The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14). This is the awe-inspiring mystery of the Incarnation. It was accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit, of course, but not without the free cooperation of the virgin, Mary of Nazareth. God's plan, carefully laid for generations, indeed for centuries, through the formation of his covenant people, was brought to realization in Mary. In this daughter of Zion, the longing of Israel came to perfection: her heart was eager to welcome the Child conceived in her womb by the overshadowing of God's Spirit. Her longing reached up, as it were, and met God's longing, reaching down. Her *fiat* flung open humanity's door, and the Word of God entered, once and for all, our Brother in the flesh come to reconcile us to the Father.

As we celebrate the birth of Mary, "cause of our joy," let us ask the help of her prayers, that we, too, may give God joy by our eagerness to welcome Christ into our hearts and bring him to birth in our world.



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