

Homily For the Feast of the Nativity of Mary - Year II

St. Peter's 8:30 AM Mass for Thursday, Sept 8, 2022

Romans 8:28-30 "Those whom he predestined (according to his purpose) he also called."

Psalms 13:5-6 "I trusted in your steadfast love. My heart shall rejoice in your salvation."

Mt. 1:1-23 "She will bear a son. You are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Not Just A Birth But A Destiny

Introduction

You Catholics are weird. That's how many look at us when they are being kind. They have other names otherwise. Our answer is a definite 'yes we are'. And we make no apology for it. Christians were always at odds with culture, doing things like rescuing babies left to die, and becoming the social safety net for the whole of Roman society as that empire crumbled.

We are the people of mystery. This is not the kind of mystery revealed to readers of novels. This is the kind of mystery that invites us to understand, but also beckons us to go deeper, always deeper, because it is the mystery of God himself: ever ancient, ever new, as St. Augustine puts it.

Mary and Destiny

This mystery has a destiny. We are called towards a destiny. We can refuse our destiny in God, but it is there for us. There is a beautiful mystery revealed by God that unfolds profoundly in Mary. From her birth she has a destiny. At every stage of her life, she embraces that destiny.

This feast celebrates Mary's personal sanctity and vocation as the mother of Jesus. Jesus obeys the same commandments given to the people of God, is able to honour his mother (the 4th commandment), in ways that we cannot. He gives her the gift of being immaculately conceived, born without original sin. That is a matter of divine revelation to the Church. Nine months later, she is born to Anne and Joachim in Nazareth. That is a matter of a very strong tradition from antiquity

Today, we celebrate the birth of the one whose destiny was to bring the Saviour of the world to birth. There is a tendency with Marian feasts to reflect on all the mysteries of her life: The Annunciation by Gabriel, her 'yes', her beautiful prayer "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord ..." and her other contributions to the saving work of her son. However, it can also be valuable to reflect specifically on what is unique about this particular feast, which is her birth.

Through a series of calculations, it can be determined that Mary was probably born around 22 BC. That was pretty much the time when Herod the Great began the huge project of rebuilding the temple. The temple was the physical place of the presence of God. Before Jesus identified himself as the new temple, Mary was born to the destiny of being the temple of God's presence. She would contain within her that presence.

The Woman

I want to emphasize today because, for some reason the world is confused about such things, that Mary was born female. She was not assigned that gender by a doctor in a hospital, as is suggested today. She was indelibly unchangeably made to become a woman, who would do what only a woman can do, to give birth. For this she was born. This was her destiny. God made her in such a way, spiritually and biologically, to achieve this destiny.

In Genesis 3:15, we read that the woman would be the instrument of crushing the head of the serpent. At the wedding feast of Cana, Jesus says: "Woman, my time has not yet come." She knew otherwise and called her son to begin to fulfil his destiny by saying to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you." On the cross, he painfully declares: "Woman, behold your son." And to John standing there: "Behold your mother."

John is the beloved disciple. As such, he represents and symbolizes all of God's beloved sons and daughters. By Jesus' words at that time of his great suffering, he declares that Mary is the mother of the beloved disciple, and therefore of all disciples from then on. She becomes that for which she was also destined from her birth, to be our mother in faith.

Romans

At Mary's birth, we already see the human nature of the Saviour of the world. She is not just any woman. She is at the heart of God's plan to bless and save the world. Jesus chose his mother, not randomly from all the women of the world or from Israel. Jesus chose his mother from the beginning of time. St Paul says in this letter that those whom God predestined, he also called. Mary is clearly the one, destined from birth, who responded most perfectly to that call.

Matthew

The genealogy at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel may seem boring and endless to us. However, at the end of that genealogy, just before Matthew introduces Jesus, the Saviour, he identifies Joseph as "the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus is born, who is called the Messiah." Now we love good St. Joseph for many things, and we must not undervalue his role, especially at a time when good husbands and fathers are under attack in the culture. But, in the genealogy, Matthew finds a way to make Joseph's identity subordinate to Mary's.

Call To Action

Mary reflects Jesus to us in the body she received at her birth and in the way she gave that body to be God's fulfilment of His plan to enter into human history. That is why we never need to apologize for our veneration of Mary.

Every family needs a mother. Only Christ could choose His own. From before time, he chose Mary. And, everything Christ has, he shares with us. His divine life is ours. His heavenly home is our home. His Father is our Father. His brothers and sisters are our brothers and sisters. And, His mother is our mother too. From her conception and from her birth, her destiny becomes our destiny. That is, to give birth to the Saviour, Jesus Christ, in our lives and in a broken world.

Let us joyfully celebrate the birth of blessed Mary, so that she may intercede for us before Jesus Christ the Lord. "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you ...

Key Scripture Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *Let us celebrate with joy the nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for from her arose the sun of justice, Christ our God.*

Collect: *We pray, O Lord, that the feast of the nativity of the Blessed Virgin may bring deeper peace to those for whom the birth of her son was the dawning of salvation.*

Romans: *We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. And those whom he predestined, he also called.*

Psalm: *I trusted in your steadfast love. My heart shall rejoice in your salvation.*

Matthew: *An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers ... and Jacob, the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph planned to dismiss her quietly. But an angel of the Lord said: Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means God is with us.*