

## Homily For Tuesday of the 3rd Week of Advent - Year II

### St Peter's 8:30AM/7:00PM Masses - Dec 17, 2019

**Genesis 49:2,8-10** "Jacob called his sons to listen to him: The scepter shall not depart from Judah."

**Psalm 72** "Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace forever."

**Mt 1:1-17** "An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

### The Path of the Promise

#### Introduction

When one of my brothers had his first child, he and his wife spent a lot of time putting her in front of a video camera. She was only a few months old when they sent us a Christmas video of Gillian and her parents cooing and gurgling at each other. It was charming for the first few minutes, still watchable for another ten minutes, but absolutely intolerable for the next hour. Our son still claims he was traumatized by having to watch it, waiting for something exciting to happen, but it never did.

Today, there is quite an interest in genealogies. On the one hand, there is a longing to be connected with our ancestors and from whom we come. More specifically, there is also tremendous interest in how technology has made possible what information our DNA might reveal to us about health related genes.

As one commentator put it, though, reading *other* people's genealogies is about as exciting as watching other people's holiday videos or, I would add, endless video footage of their beautiful children. But for the ancient Jews, each name in Matthew's genealogy told a story and recalled key events in salvation history.

#### Matthew

The first book of the New Testament is Matthew's Gospel. And the first chapter of that first book is this genealogy. Is it just a terrible way to start a story, or is it the most exciting invitation into the fulfillment of the great mystery of God's love for all people.

In the old translations of the bible, we used to call this first chapter of Matthew's gospel, 'The begets', because it went: Abraham begot Isaac, who begot Jacob, who begot Judah and his brothers, etcetera.

The Church uses this genealogy for the gospel reading at mass every December 17, just before the octave leading up to Christmas. Today, let us identify just a few of the ways we might be

able to share just a little of the excitement that the Jews, who were Matthew's audience and the first believers in Jesus Christ, might have experienced as they read how he started this account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah.

The first two words of Matthew's Gospel rendered the book of the genealogy, could literally be translated "book of Genesis". So they have an effect similar to the first words of the bible "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth," and also the first words of the Gospel of John, "In the beginning was the Word."

By tracing Jesus' lineage, Matthew places the story of Jesus within the larger plot of God's dealings with Israel and announces that Israel's story is reaching its climax in the child at the end. Most of all, the Abrahamic and Davidic ancestry of Jesus establishes his credentials to be the royal Messiah of Israel.

Son of Abraham refers to Jesus as belonging to the chosen people and as the one who fulfills the third promise God made to Abraham, that he would be a blessing and a light to all nations. Matthew will develop this further with his narrative of the magi coming from the east. Son of David refers to the fulfillment of the messianic expectations, a new deliverer, a man after God's own heart.

We might interject today's other readings here. In Genesis: "Jacob called his sons, saying O sons of Jacob, listen to Israel your father. Judah, your brothers shall praise you and shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's cub. The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, until the obedience of the peoples is his." Recall that Jesus is called the lion of the tribe of Judah.

The psalmist say: "Give your righteousness to a king's son. May his name endure forever. May all nations be blessed in him." So we get a sense of the mission of that king.

Going back to the genealogy, David and Solomon recall the glory days of Israel. There is also the note of sadness as people recall how Solomon went bad and many of the kings that follow him were downright evil, ending in the Babylonian invasion.

The most exciting part of this genealogy is the remaining eleven generations that were not known in the Old Testament. These names demonstrate the continuance of the Davidic line through the centuries of Jewish suffering, when it was thought that God had abandoned his promise because the descendants of David were cut off.

The inclusion of the women is very interesting. All four are Gentiles. They are the ones who, in essence, connect God's chosen people, the Israelites, with the promise that all nations would see and be part of his glory. They lay the foundation for the universal mission of Jesus' kingdom.

Matthew stresses the number 14. David is the 14th name in the list. The numerical value of David's name in Hebrew equals 14. Fourteen is also twice seven, which is the number of completion of creation, the number of perfection.

Finally, Joseph, the bearer of the Davidic ancestry, appears not as the father of Jesus but as the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called the Messiah. It shows how Jesus was conceived in Mary not by natural means, but by the Holy Spirit and was named and accepted by Joseph as his son, making him a true Davidic heir. In Catholic tradition, the fatherhood of Joseph lets us shift the focus to Mary. Of her was born Jesus.

'Jesus' means "Yahweh is salvation". Matthew introduces the entire New Testament by introducing Jesus as Christ, his title. He also refers to him as "Son of David, linking Jesus with the hopes for Yahweh's saving action being realized in the messiah-king, Jesus."

With God becoming man in Christ, we have the privilege of calling on his name. The divine name could not be spoken by human lips but, by assuming our humanity, the Word of God hands it over to us and we can invoke it. Jesus is Yahweh who saves. His name is the only one that contains the presence it signifies. Whoever uses the name of Jesus is welcoming the Son of God. As St. Paul says, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

### **Call To Action**

The story of Jesus genealogy encourages us to lean on the side of hope in these difficult moments. He has continued to work out his plan of salvation from one generation to the next, bringing good from evil. As it will say in the next verses: "Mary will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

The word Advent means coming. Each year during this liturgical season, the church invites us to enter into the longings of Israel for the coming of the Saviour. Through the four weeks of Advent, the Church re lives the great events of salvation history and makes present the ancient expectancy of the Messiah. By so doing, we prepare our souls to welcome him into our hearts at Christmas. Indeed, this family tree sums up "the hopes and fears of all the years".

Repeating today's Collect: Creator and Redeemer of human nature, you declared that your Word should take flesh in an ever-virgin womb. Look with favour on our prayers, that you Only Begotten Son, having taken to himself our humanity, may be pleased to grant us a share in his divinity.