

Meditations: September 8, Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on the feast of our Lady's birth.

- Joy for the birth of Mary
- God's masterpiece
- God is always faithful to his promises

“LET US CELEBRATE with joy the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for from her rose the Sun of Justice, Christ our God.”^[1] These words open

the Eucharistic celebration of today's feast. Just as the dawn announces the arrival of a new day, so the birth of the Mother of God is the "hope and dawn of salvation."^[2] With the birth of Mary the Redemption is now imminent. Generation after generation, pious Israelites had awaited the arrival of the Mother of the Messiah. As Micah prophesied, they awaited the birth of "the one who is to give birth" (cf. *Mic* 5:2).

"Perhaps we can better understand what the birth of our Lady means for mankind if we consider the plight of an incarcerated person. The prisoner's days are long, interminable... He counts each minute of his final night in jail. Then at last the doors open: the long-awaited hour of freedom has come! Those interminable minutes, counted one by one, remind us of the Gospel passage of Jesus' genealogy. Names follow other names with a

monotonous rhythm. Until finally the hour foreseen by God arrives: it is the fullness of time, the beginning of light, the dawn of salvation: ‘Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, the one called Christ’ (*Mt 1:16*).”^[3]

This Marian feast is an invitation to joy. As the psalmist sings: *my heart shall rejoice in your salvation* (*Ps 13:5*). When commemorating Mary’s birthday, a Father of the Church exclaims: “May all creation overflow with happiness and everything in the world and above the world celebrate with joy. For today the sanctuary of the Creator of all things has been built, and creation, in a new and more dignified way, is ready to receive the supreme Maker as its guest.”^[4]

MARY IS BORN in order to become, through her generous *fiat*, the Mother of the Redeemer. Our Lady has a key role in God's plan to redeem humanity. He carefully prepared, century after century, the men and women who formed her lineage. From the moment of Mary's conception, He sanctified her in a marvelous way, making her "full of grace" (cf. *Lk* 1:28). Our Lady is born immaculate by a special divine privilege in order to be the Mother of the Son of God. Although none of those around her realize it, "this child, still young and fragile, is the 'woman' of the first announcement of future redemption, placed by God to oppose the serpent of temptation (cf. *Gen* 3:15)." ^[5]

Therefore, as the saints have stressed down through the ages, we can say, with no fear of exaggeration, that this young girl is the masterpiece of God's creation, the most beautiful of

all creatures. Saint John Damascene said that “today, on earth, the one who separated the firmament from the waters and raised it on high, has created a heaven out of earthly matter, and this heaven is far more divinely splendid than the first one.”^[6]

Our Lady is the creature most dearly loved by God, the door through which He comes into this world. But although she was predestined by the Trinity to carry out an exalted mission, God wanted to wait for Mary’s free response. Saint Josemaria invites us to “consider the sublime moment when the Archangel Gabriel announces to the Virgin Mary the plans of the Most High. Our Mother listens, and asks a question to understand better what the Lord is asking of her. Then she gives her firm reply: *Fiat!* Be it done unto me according to thy word! This is the fruit of the best freedom of all,

the freedom of deciding in favor of God.”^[7]

TOGETHER with the joy of Mary’s birth, the liturgy highlights God’s providential care for us, both in our personal lives and as part of God’s people. “This feast reminds us that God is faithful to his promises and that through Mary Most Holy he has willed to dwell among us.”^[8] The genealogy of Jesus Christ that we read in the Gospel is not a simple list of names that, starting from Abraham, reaches down to Jesus. Rather it contains a deeper meaning. In this list luminous figures stand out, especially the patriarchs, who were faithful to God’s voice. But we also find among those names unsettling stories, people who behaved in a petty way.

Thus this passage makes clear once again what Saint Josemaría told us: “just as men write with a pen, so God writes with the leg of the table, so that it can be seen that it is He who is writing: that it is the incredible, the marvelous thing.”^[9] Our “successes and failures,” Benedict XVI said, “show us that God can write straight even on the crooked lines of our history. God allows us our freedom, and yet in our failures he can always find new paths for his love. God does not fail. Hence this genealogy is a guarantee of God’s faithfulness; a guarantee that God does not allow us to fall, and an invitation to direct our lives ever anew towards him, to walk ever anew towards Christ.”^[10]

When we contemplate Mary, we see the model that God himself has given us. In the litany of the Rosary we invoke her with the titles of “Virgin Most Faithful” and “Cause of our Joy.” We can ask Mary on her birthday to

help us to always be joyful by being faithful each day to God's ever new plans.

^[1] Entrance Antiphon.

^[2] Prayer after Communion.

^[3] Joseph Ratzinger, *Seeking God's Face: Meditations for the Church Year*.

^[4] Saint Andrew of Crete, Sermon 1, PG. 97, nos. 806-810.

^[5] Saint John Paul II, Homily, 8 September 1980.

^[6] Saint John Damascene, *Homily on the Nativity of Mary*, PG 96, 661.

^[7] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 25.

^[8] Francis, General Audience, 8 September 2021.

^[9] Saint Josemaría, Meditation, 2 October 1962.

^[10] Benedict XVI, Homily, 8 September 2007.

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