

Prologue: Matthew 1-2

G.K. Chesterton writes:

It is essential to recognize that the Roman Empire was recognized as the highest achievement of the human race; and also the broadest. A dreadful secret seemed to be written as in obscure hieroglyphics across those mighty works of marble and stone, those colossal amphitheatres and aqueducts. Man could do no more...

There was nothing left that could conquer Rome; but there was also nothing left that could improve it. It was the strongest thing that was growing weak. It was the best thing that was going bad. It is necessary to insist again and again that many civilizations had met in one civilization of the Mediterranean sea; that it was already universal with a stale and sterile universality. The peoples had pooled their resources and still there was not enough. The empires had gone into partnership and they were still bankrupt...the wave of the world had risen to its highest, seeming to touch the stars. But the wave was already stooping; for it was only the wave of the world. (Everlasting Man chapter 8)

We may wonder – why did God wait so long before sending the Savior?

The answer lies in the fact that the world was not ready.

St. Thomas: Nor was it fitting that God should become incarnate immediately after sin. First, on account of the manner of man's sin, which had come of pride; hence man was to be liberated in such a manner that he might be humbled, and see how he stood in need of a deliverer.

Jesus is the New Adam who inaugurates the new creation

Matthew 1:1 “the genealogy” “the genesis” the beginning

- The word “genealogy” is the same word in Greek for “genesis” which we find at the beginning of the Old Testament.
- In Jesus God is providing a new genesis; a new beginning
 - Genesis 1:1; 2:4; 5:1 This is the book of the generations of Adam.

St. Paul explains that Jesus is the New Adam in 1 Cor 15: 21-22, 45

Luke 1:26-38 The Annunciation

John Paul II in *Theotokos, Woman, Mother, Disciple* teaches:

The angel Gabriel calls her by a new name “Full of grace” *Kecharitomene*.

In Jewish usage, a name expresses the reality of the person. This Greek term comes from the root “charitoo” which means “the love of God which transforms.” Mary was filled with God’s grace in the most perfect and lasting way from the first instant of her conception. She was transformed to the beginning of a New Creation as the New Eve – the New Mother of the living. This is what is meant by the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception

The Fathers of the Church and the Second Vatican Council speak of this truth when they called Mary the “all-holy one”, affirming that she was “fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature” LG 56

Andrew of Crete, in the 8th century speaking about the birth of Mary (September 8)

writes: “Today humanity, in all the radiance of her immaculate nobility, receives its ancient beauty. The shame of sin had darkened the splendor and attraction of human nature, but when the mother of the fair one par excellence is born, this nature regains in her person its ancient privileges and is fashioned according to a perfect model truly worthy of God...The reform of our nature begins today and the aged world, subjected to a wholly divine transformation, receives the first fruits of the second creation”

John Paul II goes on to say: “Mary’s pure and Immaculate Conception is thus seen as the beginning of the new creation. It is a question of a personal privilege granted to the woman chosen to be Christ’s Mother, who ushers in the time of abundant grace God willed for all humanity”

Luke 1:39-45 The Visitation

CCC 721 For the first time in the plan of salvation and because his Spirit had prepared her, the Father found the dwelling place where His Son and His Spirit could dwell among men.

Jean Ruusbroec (1293-1381) When God thought the time came to show his pity for the suffering of his beloved he sent his Son on the earth in a very rich room and glorious temple which was the body of the Virgin Mary. It is there that he wedded his fiancé who is our nature and unified her to his Person in the pure blood of the noble Virgin. The priest who celebrates the wedding was the Holy Spirit. The angel Gabriel proclaims the announcement, the glorious Virgin gave the consent.

Luke writes the scene of the Visitation in order to teach us that Mary is the Ark of the Covenant. Luke draws a parallel between: The visitation of Mary to Elizabeth in 1:39-56 and the Ark of the Covenant coming to David in 2 Samuel 6:2-16

- 1) David *arose and went* back to Judah to a house which was on a *hill* (II Sam 6:2-3)
Mary *arose and went* to the *hill country of Judah* (Lk 1:39)
- 2) “How can the ark of the covenant of the *Lord come to me?* (II Sam 6:9)
“Who am I that the mother of my *Lord should come to me?* (Lk 1:43)
- 3) *To the house* of Obed-dom (II Sam 6:10)
To the house of Zechariah (Lk 1:40)
- 4) The Ark was *there for three months* (II Sam 6:11)
Mary stayed *there three months* (Lk 1:56)
- 5) There was *rejoicing* (II Sam 6:12)
Mary *rejoices* (Lk 1:47)
- 6) David shouting (II Sam 6:15)
Elizabeth’s loud cry (Lk 1:42)
- 7) There is leaping and dancing (II Sam 6:17)
The babe leaps in Elizabeth’s womb (Lk 1:41)

Revelation 11-12 The Apostle John sees the heavens open up, in God's temple the Ark of the Covenant is revealed: The Ark is the woman clothed with 12 stars. The Woman and the Ark of the Covenant are revealed as one and the same!

The role of the Ark in the Old Covenant:

- The Ark was the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit (Ex 40:34-38)
- To bear the presence of God to the people

The role of Mary in the New Covenant:

- To be the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit
- To bear the presence of Christ to the world
- To bear Christ to each of us

Luke 2: 1-20 The Birth of Christ

O marvelous exchange! Man's Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity. (LH, Antiphon I of Evening Prayer for Jan 1st)

Romans 8:28-29 Brothers and sisters: we know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

The purpose of life is two-fold:

1. Become a child of God through the sacraments
2. Allow your life to be completely conformed to the model of Jesus

CCC 526 Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us.

Matthew 2: 1-2 Who are these Wisemen?

Numbers 22: 2- 6 Balak and Balaam

Israel's reputation precedes her, causing panic in Balak, Moab's head of state. For certain he has heard what happened to the Egyptians and the Amalekites since this Moses began to lead them. If Egypt could not defeat them; in such a crisis perhaps one's trump card is magic. To that end, Balak send an urgent message to Balaam: The Moabites want the false prophet Balaam to curse Israel, that by means of this curse they might defeat them in battle. Balaam's job, should he accept is simple enough. He is to pronounce a curse on the Israelites that will immobilize them, making them vulnerable to defeat by Balak. But God will not let them be cursed because He has already blessed them. The power of Satan is not greater than the covenant blessing of the Lord.

Matthew 2: 3-4 Why was Herod Troubled?

1. Herod was not a Jew and Jacob had prophesied that the Messiah would come when a non-Jew sat on the throne of Israel

2. Daniel had prophesied when the Messiah would come and the time had arrived (see Daniel 9:24-27)

The full prophecy is a precise foretelling of when the Messiah will come, when he will die, and what will occur immediately following his death. It is hard to imagine Christ's coming to be foretold in detail down to the specific year, and yet this is what we have here, over five hundred years before Jesus is born. It states that from the time the command is given to "return and rebuild Jerusalem"¹ 49 years ("seven weeks") will pass before the completion of the building of the walls of Jerusalem, and 490 years will pass before the Messiah comes. The command is given by King Artaxerxes in the year 458 BC. 490 years from 458 is 31 AD, which is the exact year (give or take a few months) that many scholars have dated the beginning of Christ's public ministry with his baptism by John the Baptist.² The prophecy also states that after "half of the week" (3 ½ years) the Messiah "shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease," and that the desolation will continue to the end. It was about three years and four months after Jesus' baptism that he was crucified, at which time the Temple veil was rent in two as a sign that the Temple sacrifices would cease.

Luke 2: 51- 52 The hidden life of Jesus

CCC 533 The hidden life at Nazareth allows everyone to enter into fellowship with Jesus by the most ordinary events of daily life:

The home of Nazareth is the school where we begin to understand the life of Jesus – the school of the Gospel. First, then, a lesson of silence. May esteem for *silence*, that admirable and indispensable condition of mind, revive in us...A lesson on family life. May Nazareth teach us what family life is, its communion of love, its austere and simple beauty, and its sacred and unbreakable character...A lesson of work. Nazareth, home of the "Carpenter's Son," in you I would choose to understand and proclaim the severe and redeeming law of human work... (Pope Paul VI)

Rosarium 15

The Rosary mystically transports us to Mary's side as she is busy watching over the human growth of Christ in the home of Nazareth. This enables her to train us and mold us with the same care, until Christ is fully formed in us.

¹ which occurs in 458 BC by the King Artaxerxes I, see Ezra 7:11-26

² including the ancient Church historian Bishop Eusebius