

Mary, Mother of God

Year A, 2026

Nm 6:22-27

Gal 4:4-7

Ps 67

Lk 2:16-21

The fullness of time

When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman. So writes St Paul in our second reading, from his letter to the Galatians. In St Paul's writings, which take up a third of all the New Testament, this little passage alone is the most direct reference he makes to Mary, the Virgin Mother of God. St Paul never mentions Mary by name or gives any further detail about the birth of the Son of God, except to say that he was in fact born, *a descendent of David according to the flesh* (Rom 1:3), *born of human origin* (Rom 9:5), *coming in human likeness*, and *found human in appearance* (Phil 2:7-8).

The absence, though, of any direct mention of the Mother of God in St Paul's writings is not a *flaw* on the part of the Apostle's presentation of the Good News. Rather, it is a *feature* of his Christ-centeredness, of his being wholly taken up *in Christ*, "caught up through him in love of things invisible" (Pref. I Christmas). And that little phrase, "in Christ," or "in him" is one of the most common expressions found in St Paul's writings, occurring over 100 times. It is St Paul's experience of being "in Christ" that completely engulfs him, *overshadowing* his mind and his vision with *the eternal* Light that is Christ Jesus, who in the fullness of time

was brought forth into the world (Pref. BVM), born of a woman, the firstborn of all creation (Col 1:15).

And so today on this eighth day of Christmas – *eight maids a-milking* – we venerate the mystery of the Word made flesh by contemplating the motherhood of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the maiden from whose breasts the Son of God drew the milk that fed him, that he *might grow strong and be filled with wisdom and favor before God and man* (Lk 2:40, 52).

When the fullness of time had come, St Paul tells us, then and only then did God send into the world his only-begotten Son to be born of a woman. Not at the beginning of time. Not at the end of time. But *when the fullness of time had come*. Time, then, takes on a feminine and motherly quality. When time itself had become ripe, full, heavy, pregnant even, God moved to act, finally to make visible what until then had remained invisible, himself, the Godhead.

Is this connection between motherhood and “mother time” circumstantial, incidental, accidental ... or is it *providential*? God alone could have foreseen all that would come to be. And so he who exists outside of time created time itself. Is the story of creation not framed in terms of time – the first day through the seventh day? Time is created by God to be the receptacle of his creative power. Out of himself, that is to say, out of love, God creates the womb of time in which to create the cosmos, in which

to sow the seed of creation, a creation that he commands to be fertile and multiply and fill the earth.

Time, then, is the womb of all creation. And the first woman, called Eve, is the last and greatest work of creation, who *“became the mother of all the living”* (Gen 3:20). As creation progressed over the eons – a period of gestation, if you will – then, in the fullness of time, God began the work of redemption, when he sent his Son to be born of a woman, called Mary, whose motherhood begins a new order, a new time, no longer the order or the time of creation, but now the order and time of redemption.

From now on, with the birth of the Son of God, creation is restored by and taken up into redemption. From now on, creation and redemption are intertwined in Christ Jesus, true God and true man, whose Father is *God, the Father the almighty, Creator of heaven and earth*, whose Mother is Mary, fairest daughter of all creation, who has become, is now, and ever shall be mother of time and of eternity, for she is truly the mother of the Redeemer, the mother of the Creator, the mother of all creation, the mother of God. From now on, all that was born in time is born again in grace, and time itself ... and *“all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved”* (Rom 8:22-24).

So writes St Paul in his letter to the Romans, again using the imagery of motherhood to express the great work of God in each soul saved in hope and made glad by its redemption in Christ, who came in the fullness of time, *born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*

I know that this homily, though brief, has touched upon some weighty, heavy themes, themes *pregnant* with meaning and prayer, but I did say at the start that on this eighth day of Christmas we were going to *contemplate* the meaning of the motherhood of the Mother of God, and so honor the mystery of the Word made flesh. And this contemplation has led us to reflect on creation and on redemption, on the Creator and on the Redeemer, on time and on eternity ... and on the woman who “*kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart,*” who carried them in her pure and virginal womb, and who, *when the fullness of time had come*, brought them forth into the world, Mary, the mother of creation, redemption, time, and eternity... Mary, the holy Mother of God.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, we fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, our mother; to thee do we come, before thee we stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not our petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer us. Amen.