

***The Nativity of our Lord***  
*Christmas Vigil Mass - Mt 1:1-25*  
*Ave Maria Catholic Church, December 24, 2022 - Fr. David M Vidal*

Saint Matthew astounds us with a long list of names right at the beginning of his gospel. Without a doubt, Saint Matthew points out that Jesus is the long-awaited promised Messiah of whom the prophets spoke. Jesus is the rightful Son of David, the forever and true King of Israel.

After a long list of names that trace back to Abraham (our father in faith), Saint Matthew declares: “*Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus, who is called the Messiah,*” (Mt 1:16). Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, is of the family of David, and then, Mary who is betrothed to Joseph also belongs to the same family.

How important it is to see the way Saint Matthew arranged this list of names! Typically, Jewish genealogies did not mention women. They only listed men as the heads of their households. However, Saint Matthew mentions four women: Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, and Ruth. And these four women were not just any women. Each one of them carried with them a stigma.

**Tamar** is a name most Jewish people likely wanted to forget. Judah was reluctant to give Tamar his son in marriage, believing Tamar was somehow cursed by God. Then, Tamar took things into her own hands, dressed up like a woman of the street, and went to the main roadway. Judah propositioned her, and as a result, she conceived Perez, who would be an ancestor of King David.

**Rahab** was also a woman of the street (Joshua 2:1-7). When the Jewish spies came to scout out the land of Jericho, she was the one who hid them in her home and protected them. She had heard of the miracles God wrought with Israel in Egypt and in the wilderness, and, unlike the rest of her country, she turned to faith in Yahweh. She married Salmon of the tribe of Judah and was the mother of Boaz and the great-great-grandmother of King David.

**Ruth** was not Jewish; she was a Moabite. Moabites were not simply Gentiles; they were one of Israel’s sworn enemies. They were not even allowed to enter the worship gathering of Israel. But because of her love and kindness, she eventually became Boaz's wife and King David's great-grandmother.

**Bathsheba** was the wife of Uriah. King David had a sinful relationship with her, and then he ordered the death of Uriah, for which he later repented. Bathsheba will become the mother of Solomon, the son of David.

Those names have an important meaning. This is the history of humanity, a humanity that was wounded by sin. We must not deny history. We need to read history and learn from

history. Then, when we read history with the eyes of faith, we learn that God works miracles from deficient and poor instruments. From a humanity that is falling apart, God recreates his new people. From dust, or even more, from rocks, God makes children of Abraham, children of the promise!

There is an old saying, sometimes attributed to Saint Teresa of Avila, that prays: “*God writes straight on crooked lines.*” God is that marvelous poet who can turn even the most damaged parchment of this world into a masterpiece. He is the greatest composer who, from the dissonant and chaotic sound of the sin of Adam and Eve, started a new and most beautiful melody.

Then, Saint Matthew, the evangelist, recalls the angel’s words to Saint Joseph: “*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,’ which means ‘God is with us,’* (Mt. 1: 22-23).

### **The Virgin Mother Immaculate.**

The new melody of salvation starts with a miracle of grace. It begins with the Virgin Mother Immaculate. The Servant of God, Pope Pius IX, tells us that *God, by the foreseen merits of the death of Christ, shielded Mary from all stain of sin and preserved the Virgin Mother immaculate at her conception so that she might be a fitting dwelling place for His Son.* (Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, 1854).

The Virgin Mary Immaculate is the first note of the new song of redemption and salvation. This is the song that the choirs of angels proclaimed over the stable of Bethlehem glorifying the Lord: “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among people with whom He is pleased!*” (Lk 2:14).

What is the motive of this glory? What is the reason for this peace? Through Jesus, with Jesus, in Jesus, we glorify God. Without Jesus, we were speechless; without Jesus, we were in silence. But with Jesus, God-with-us, we magnify the Lord for the great things He has done for us!

And again, through Jesus, with Jesus, in Jesus, we obtain peace. Christ restores the broken order; Christ restores the broken hearts. Jesus reestablishes friendship with God. Then, friendship and peace with our brothers and sisters are possible through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ.

### **What is the sign of this miracle of grace: the Nativity of the Lord?**

Saint Luke tells us: “*The time came for Mary to be delivered. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger,*” (Lk 2:6).

Then the angels told the shepherds: *“Today in the city of David, a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger,”* (Lk 2: 11-12).

This is the sign of the miracle of redemption: An infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger! The shepherds saw the sign and glorified and praised God (Lk 2:20).

We also know that some time after, the Magi saw the same sign, and *“they prostrated themselves and did him homage,”* (Mt 2: 11).

This is the sign of God, who introduces a miracle of grace from the simplest element. This is the sign of Jesus and Mary summarized in this brief passage: *“She wrapped him in swaddling clothes.”*

The swaddling clothes were ready, so the child could be given a fitting welcome. There is no room at the inn. In some way, humanity is awaiting God, waiting for him to draw near. But when the moment comes, there is no room for him. But Mary was ready.

Just as in the gospel of Saint Luke, we encounter the maternal love of Mary, the fidelity of Saint Joseph, and the vigilance of the shepherds and their great joy. Just as in the gospel of Saint Matthew, we encounter the visit of the wise men and their adoration, so too the evangelist John tells us: *“To all who received him, he gave the power to become children of God”* (Jn 1:12).

Let us welcome the child Jesus into our hearts!

Let us read our past with faith and humility. Let us recognize that there is nothing that cannot be transformed and redeemed if we are open to the work of God in us.

Let us live the present with courage and enthusiasm. If God is with us, who can be against us? We only need to move closer to Him. We must learn to do all things through Him, with Him, and in Him. Then, we will give glory to God, and we will enjoy his peace.

Let us face the future with hope, knowing that God produces miracles of grace from the simplest elements of life! Amen.