

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

8 September

Memorial

A legend dating from the second century tells this story about the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary:¹

Once upon a time there was a Jewish couple named Jo'-a-chim and Anne. They were elderly, and their neighbours reproached them for not having any children. But God heard Anne's laments and sent an angel to tell her: "You shall conceive and bear, and your offspring shall be spoken of in all the world." Anne responded: "As the Lord my God lives, if I bear a child, whether male or female, I will bring it as a gift to the Lord my God, and it shall serve him all the days of its life."

And so it came to pass that Anne conceived; and when the time was fulfilled, she gave birth to a daughter and named her Mary. Both parents vowed to dedicate their child to the service of God, and when she was three years old they presented her in the temple at Jerusalem. "And the high priest placed Mary on the third step of the altar, and the Lord God put grace upon the child, and she danced for joy with her feet, and the whole house of Israel loved her."

Such is the legend of the nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and we continue to tell the story because it bears witness to a deeper truth of faith — that Mary herself was the daughter of Israel's hope and the child whose own offspring would fulfill the longing of the whole family of creation.

See Readings, page 631.

¹ See "A Note Concerning Legendary Material" on page 22.

Sentence

Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. *Isaiah 51.3*

Collect

Eternal God,
who revealed the mystery of your loving providence
in the birth of Mary, the Mother of our Lord,
grant that we who now call her blessed
may be clothed with the light of your new creation
and rejoice with her
in the radiance of our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Readings

Isaiah 61.9-11 Psalm 132.6-8, 14-18

Refrain Here will I dwell, for I delight in her.
Luke 1.26-33

Prayer over the Gifts

Hand of redemption,
enfold us with your love,
that we may share in the blessing
which you bestowed upon Mary,
and celebrate according to your will
this mystery of the holy Child she bore;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Preface of the Incarnation

Prayer after Communion

God of faithfulness and truth,
who formed us in the image of your Word,
grant us so to bear your Son into the world
that this earth may become the cradle
where you nurture your new creation.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.