

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy  
Mother of God  
January 1, 2019  
+

The western world did not always count the beginning of the New Year from January 1<sup>st</sup>. Long before it was decided to do that, this day was set aside as *Mary's Day* in the Christmas Season. This is a day when Holy Church remembers and gives thanks for Our Lady, for her consent to become the instrument of the Incarnation, and for the fact that this was a *voluntary* and not mechanical act.

There is probably no greater possession of a virtuous and holy woman than her reputation for purity. Blessed Mary risked even that reputation. Except for what belongs to God alone, is there anything we do not owe to the Blessed Virgin? We trace our ruin to the disobedience of Eve. But we trace our restoration to the loving obedience of Mary. Even the account of the Christmas events we love so dearly is a gift from this holy Virgin. Scripture tells us she pondered every detail of Our Lord's infancy. So there was simply no one else to recount the contents that are found in Saint Luke's Gospel. The very way we celebrate Christmas, with the manger and the carols based upon that scene, goes back to Our Lady.

There is something else the Church commemorates on this Eighth Day of Christmas: The Circumcision of Christ. According to Jewish custom, that action includes the formal naming of the child. The name Jesus means *Saviour*. And outwardly on that first Eighth Day of Christmas it looked more as if *this baby* needed the saving! All around Him was poverty, weakness, suffering, and danger. Yet at the naming of this tiny baby, probably crying in His mother's arms after the circumcision, all the Heavenly Host knelt in adoration. Saint Paul knew about that. He told the Philippians: "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in Heaven and on earth, and under the earth." (2:10)

At the Circumcision and Naming of Jesus Love Incarnate was revealing Himself through suffering as the Saviour of His poor and lost creatures. God the Son was voluntarily obeying laws made for His fallen creatures like us. For love of us the Lord Jesus accepted in His sinless Manhood the suffering that was our due.

And this didn't happen just once! In fact suffering Love will be the pattern of His Incarnate Life, a pattern first revealed on the Eighth Day of Christmas. So, by His

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy  
Mother of God  
January 1, 2019  
+

grace, and the determined act of our will, let it be our response to His great love for us that we dedicate ourselves once more to following Blessed Jesus ever more closely in this New Year.