

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford at Evensong on
The Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
September 8, 2019

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The Catholic Church observes three great birthdays: that of Our Lord on Christmas Day, of John the Baptist on June 24th, (of whom Our Lord Jesus declared of all born of woman none was greater) and today's feast, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. About the birthday of Jesus we have all the particulars given us in Saint Luke's Gospel. From St Luke we also know about the mysterious events surrounding the birth of St John.

In contrast to all this, the Scriptures give us nothing of the birth or death of the Blessed Virgin. She suddenly appears, a young girl. And the next time we see her she is holding God in her arms! In all the Scriptures she only speaks seven times. This girl was so willing when God sent the archangel Gabriel to gain her consent. But the Gospel Good News is her Son, not Mary herself. And after redemption is accomplished, she is perfectly silent. Of the events of her death we only have the vision in *The Revelation of Saint John the Divine* of "a woman clothed with the Sun, and the Moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."

What all this tells us is not simply that the Gospel is Jesus Christ and not His mother. The *very lack of information* about her reminds us the Blessed Virgin Mary is no dramatic mother, concocted by a fertile imagination or the ecstasy of a fevered brain. She is a *real* mother, of a *real* Man Who was and is also God. Saint Luke makes this abundantly clear in what he does tell us. For his account of the Birth of Christ is full of particulars, details, exactly given as precisely as he had information. The date, the time, the people involved, are all mentioned. This was so there will be no mistake. Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, was born of a real mother, at a time and place certain. To establish this fact is one of the reasons Luke wrote his gospel account.

As Scripture unfolds, as we contemplate Who Jesus Christ is, our amazement, awe, and reverence for His mother grows. *The more we contemplate Him, the more we revere Blessed Mary.* It is as simple and profound as that.

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19th Century English poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti set this approach to our devotion in a beautiful verse called *Mary's Girlhood*:

“So held she through her girlhood; as it were
An angel-watered lily, that near God
Grows and is quiet. Till, one dawn at home
She woke in her white bed, and had no fear
At all- yet wept till sunshine, and felt awed:
Because the fullness of the time was come.”

With Mary we too are in awe of Jesus. And because of that, *we are in awe of her.*