

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Solemnity of Mary,  
The Holy Mother of God  
January 1, 2021

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Long before the world decided to begin its calendar year on January 1<sup>st</sup>, this day was set aside as *Mary's Day* in the Christmas Season. On this day Holy Church remembers, and gives thanks for, Our Lady. Those thanks are for her consent to make possible the Incarnation, and for the fact her consent was *voluntary*, and not automatic.

We give those thanks, of course, on March 25<sup>th</sup>, when we commemorate the Annunciation and Mary's *fiat mihi*. But we do it again in the context of the birth of her Divine Son nine months later. There is probably no greater possession for a holy woman than her reputation for chastity. Blessed Mary risked even that reputation. Is there anything we do not owe her? We trace our disobedience to Eve. But we trace our restoration to the loving obedience of Mary.

Among the gifts from this holy Virgin is our possession of the circumstances of Christmas. We love that account so dearly. And we are told the Blessed Virgin pondered every detail and kept them in her heart. There was simply no one else to tell the story to Saint Luke. We did a chancel drama on Sunday over forty years ago. It was based upon the Annunciation. St Luke was gathering items in preparation for writing out the gospel which bears his name. In the play Luke is seen coaxing the elderly Virgin Mary into sharing the details of Our Lord's birth and infancy. The very way we celebrate Christmas, with the manger, and the carols based upon the scene, is the gift of Our Lady to us.

There is something else the Church commemorates on this 8<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas: the Circumcision of Christ. According to Jewish custom, what comes with that ceremony is the *formal naming* of the child. *Jesus* means **Saviour**. And outwardly, after His birth, it looked more as if *the baby* needed the saving! He was surrounded by poverty, weakness, suffering, and danger. Yet at the naming of this tiny baby at His circumcision, the entire Heavenly host knelt in adoration. They knew best because they knew Divine Truth. The Truth was crying in His mother's arms! Remember St Paul's memorable phrase: "At the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in Heaven and on earth, and under the earth." (*Philippians 2:10*) Human eyes

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could not see it, but that is what was happening. In that moment, Love Incarnate was revealing Himself through suffering as the Saviour of His poor lost creatures.

God the Son was voluntarily obeying laws made not for Him but for fallen creatures like us. For love of us the Lord Jesus accepted in His sinless Manhood the suffering that was our due. That would be the pattern of His life. It was a pattern already revealed when, eight days old, Blessed Jesus shed His Precious Blood for us.