

Our Lord Jesus—who was with his Father before being born from his mother—didn’t just pick out the virgin who would give birth to him. He also picked out the day when he’d be born. People pick out days all the time too, as they wander about. Some pick out days for planting, others for building, still others for taking a trip. Sometimes people even pick out a day for getting married! When we do this kind of thing, we’re doing it so that what’s born on that day will be nourished by luck. Still, no one can pick out the day when they’re born! But Jesus was able to pick out both his mother and his birthday, since he was even able to create both.

He didn’t pick the day out like those who ‘pick out the days’ by pointlessly deriving human fates from the arrangement of the stars. Jesus wasn’t made lucky by the day he was born. No, he made that day lucky by deigning to be born on it! This day of his birth bears within it the mystery of his light. “First came the night,” said the Apostle, “but the day has drawn near. Let’s reject the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, as we walk honorably in the day.” Let’s acknowledge this day. Let’s be this day. When we were living without faith, we were the night. That faithlessness covered the whole world when night had its turn, but it has now been diminished while faith increases. That’s why the nights suffer getting shorter and shorter, while the day gets longer and longer starting on this birthday of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

So, brothers and sisters, let’s keep this day special—but not like the faithless, who do it on account of that sun out there. No, let’s keep it special on account of the one who made that sun! He was the word. He was made flesh so he could be under that sun for our sake. His flesh was under the sun, but his greatness was above the whole world where he put that sun. But now his flesh too is above the sun, the same sun that’s worshipped as a god by those who are blind in their minds. They can’t see the true sun of justice.

So, Christians, on this day we celebrate not a divine birth, but a human one. It’s the birth that mixed him in with us, so we could pass over from the visible to the invisible by way of the invisible made visible. According to the Catholic faith, we have to hold on to these two births of the Lord: one divine, the other human; one timeless, the other in time. Both are shocking: one without a mother, the other without a father!

If we can’t comprehend the second birth, when are we going to tell the story of the first? Who can comprehend this brand-new novelty, so unusual that it’s unique in the world? Who can comprehend the unbelievable made believable, unbelievably believed even by the whole world? A virgin gets pregnant? A virgin gives birth? A virgin gives birth but remains a virgin?

Faith can grasp what human reason can’t find out for itself. Where human reason falls back, faith pushes on. Who would say that the Word of God—through which all things were made—couldn’t make some flesh for himself, even without a mother? Didn’t he make the first man without father and mother? But since he created both sexes—masculine and feminine—he wanted to honor both with his birth. He had come to set both sexes free.

You know, of course, about the fall of that first person. The serpent didn’t dare speak to the man; instead, he used the woman as an instrument for throwing the man down. He got hold of the stronger one through the weaker. He penetrated through one and triumphed over both. But the Lord came so that we couldn’t tremble at our death through the woman, as if shaking with justified grief, and believe that woman had been condemned without redemption. The Lord came to look for what had been lost. Since both sexes had been lost, he wanted to help them out by honoring

both. So we shouldn't do a disservice to the creator when it comes to either sex. Our Lord's birth has entrusted both to the salvation we hope for. The flesh of Christ honors the masculine sex, while the mother of Christ honors the feminine.

The grace of Jesus Christ has conquered the serpent's tricks! Both sexes should be reborn in the one who was born today. Both should celebrate today. But our Lord Christ didn't begin to be on this day. No, he was always with the Father, but on this day he received flesh from his mother and came forth into this light. He gave her fertility without taking away her integrity.

So he's conceived. He's born. He's an infant. But who is this infant? We call them infants because they can't speak, they can't talk. So: he's an infant. But he's also the word! In the flesh, he's silent, though he teaches through angels. A prince, a shepherd of shepherds, is proclaimed to shepherds. Food for faithful beasts is lying in the barn, as had been predicted through the prophet: "the cow recognizes its owner; the donkey recognizes its master's field." That's why he sat on a little donkey when he entered Jerusalem, with a crowd behind him and a crowd in front of him.

And we should recognize it, too! We should go into the barn and eat the food. We should let our master and driver get on our backs so that he can lead us to the heavenly Jerusalem!

Christ's birth from his mother is weak, but the greatness he gets from his Father is ample. In the days of time, he has his own day in time, but he is also the eternal day from the eternal day. His psalm sets us on fire, like the voice of a heavenly trumpet, and rightly so when we hear: "Sing a new song to the Lord! Sing to the Lord, every country! Sing to the Lord and speak good of His name." So let's recognize this day, and we'll proclaim that this is the day of the day who was born in the flesh on this day! The Son-day comes from the Father-day, as God from God, light from light.

This preserves what is said elsewhere: "May god have mercy on us and bless us; may he light his face up above us, so that we can come to know your path on the earth and your salvation of all the nations." What was said 'on earth' was repeated 'throughout all the nations.' What was said about 'your way' was repeated about 'your salvation.' We recall that the Lord Himself said, "I am the way." And when the gospel was being read just now, we heard about how that blessed old man Simeon received the divine response that he would not taste death unless he first saw the Lord's anointed one. When he took the infant Christ into his hands, he recognized him as a great little one. "Now, Lord," he said, "you are sending your slave away in peace. You've kept your word, as my eyes have seen your salvation."

So let's proclaim loudly the day of the day! Let's proclaim his salvation! Let's tell the nations about his glory and tell every kind of people about what makes him so shocking. He's lying in a barn, but he contains the whole world. He's breastfed, but feeds angels. He's wrapped up in rags, but clothes us with immortality. He gets milk to drink, but he's revered. He couldn't find a place in an inn, but he made a temple for himself in the hearts of those who believe. Strength became weak so that weakness could become strong.

So rather than underestimating his birth in the flesh, we should be shocked! We should recognize how great the height of humility was in that birth, all for our sake. We should let it set us ablaze with love, so that we can come to his eternity.