

Men of Saint Michael

"Iron sharpens iron, as one man sharpens another"

Proverbs 27:17.



Newsletter



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*Lord God,
the day of our salvation dawned
when the Blessed Virgin gave birth to your Son.
As we celebrate her nativity
grant us your grace and your peace.
Through Christ our Lord, Amen.*

The Spiritual Tradition Regarding Mary's Birth

Sacred Scripture does not record Mary's birth. The earliest known writing regarding Mary's birth is found in the *Protoevangelium of James* (5:2), which is an apocryphal writing from the late 2nd century. What matters is not the historicity of the account, but the significance of Mary's and of every person's birth. In Mary's case, the early Church grew more and more interested in the circumstances surrounding the origin of Christ. Discussion about Mary throws light on the discussion about the identity of Jesus Christ.

The Church usually celebrates the passing of a person, that is, the person's entry into eternal life. Besides the birth of Christ, the Christian liturgy celebrates only two other birthdays: that of St. John the Baptizer and of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. It is not the individual greatness of these saints that the Church celebrates, but their role in salvation history, a role directly connected to the Redeemer's own coming into the world. Mary's birth lies at the confluence of the two Testaments--bringing to an end the stage of expectation and the promises and inaugurating the new times of grace and salvation in Jesus Christ. Mary, the Daughter of Zion and ideal personification of Israel, is the last and most worthy representative of the People of the Old Covenant but at the same time she is "the hope and the dawn of the whole world." With her, the elevated Daughter of Zion, after a long expectation of the promises, the times are fulfilled and a new economy is established. (*Lumen Gentium* 55)

The birth of Mary is ordained in particular toward her mission as Mother of the Savior. Her existence is indissolubly connected with that of Christ: it partakes of a unique plan of predestination and grace. God's mysterious plan regarding the Incarnation of the Word embraces also the Virgin who is His Mother. In this way, the Birth of Mary is inserted at the very heart of the History of Salvation. (M. Valentini, *Dictionary of Mary*, pp. 36-7.)



Birth of the Virgin; Murillo

*Thy birth, O Virgin Mother of God,
heralded joy to all the world.
For from thou hast risen the Sun of justice,
Christ our God.
Destroying the curse, He gave blessing;
and damning death, He bestowed on us
life everlasting.
Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.
For from thou hast risen of Sun of justice,
Christ our God.*

from The Divine Office - *Matins* (Morning Prayer)

September 8, The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The present Feast forms a link between the New and the Old Testament. It shows that Truth succeeds symbols and figures and that the New Covenant replaces the Old. Hence, all creation sings with joy, exults, and participates in the joy of this day.... This is, in fact, the day on which the Creator of the world constructed His temple; today

is the day on which by a stupendous project a creature becomes the preferred dwelling of the Creator" (Saint Andrew of Crete).

"Let us celebrate with joy the birth of the Virgin Mary, of whom was born the Sun of Justice.... Her birth constitutes the hope and the light of salvation for the whole world.... Her image is light for the whole Christian people" (From the Liturgy).

As these texts so clearly indicate, an atmosphere of joy and light pervades the Birth of the Virgin Mary.

1. Historical Details about the Feast

The origin of this Feast is sought in Palestine. It goes back to the consecration of a church in Jerusalem, which tradition identifies as that of the present basilica of St. Ann.

At Rome the Feast began to be kept toward the end of the 7th century, brought there by Eastern monks. Gradually and in varied ways it spread to the other parts of the West in the centuries that followed. From the 13th century on, the celebration assumed notable importance, becoming a Solemnity with a major Octave and preceded by a Vigil calling for a fast. The Octave was reduced to a simple one during the reform of St. Pius X and was abolished altogether under the reform of Pius XII in 1955.

The present Calendar characterizes the Birth of Mary as a "Feast," placing it on the same plane as the Visitation.

For some centuries now, the Birth has been assigned to September 8 both in the East and in the West, but in ancient times it was celebrated on different dates from place to place. However, when the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (which has a later origin than that of the Birth) was extended to the whole Church, the Birth little by little became assigned everywhere to September 8: nine months after the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

2. At the Heart of Salvation

As we know, the Gospels have not transmitted to us anything about the birth of the Virgin Mary. Their attention is completely centered on the mystery of Christ and His salvific mission.

The birth of Mary is recounted by the Protevangelium of James (5:2), an apocryphal writing from the end of the 2nd century. Subsequent tradition is based on this account.

The description - although in the manner of an apocryphal document - obviously presents an important historical event: the birth of the Mother of the Lord.

But the problem that concerns us here is the significance of this event. In the case of all the Saints, the Church commemorates their birthday on the day of their return to the Lord. However, in the cases of St. John the Baptizer and the Blessed Virgin, it also celebrates the day of their earthly birth. This is a singular fact already emphasized in ancient times, for example, by Paschasius Radbertus (d. about 859).

The reason for this fact is not found primarily in the greatness or the privileges of the persons involved but in the singular mission that was theirs in the History of Salvation. In this light, the birth of the Blessed Virgin is considered to be - like that of John the Baptizer - in direct relationship with the coming of the Savior of the world. Thus, the birth and existence of Mary similar to and even more than those of the Baptizer - take on a significance that transcends her own person. It is explained solely in the context of the History of Salvation, connected with the People of God of the Old Covenant and the New. Mary's birth lies at the confluence of the two Testaments -

bringing to an end the stage of expectation and the promises and inaugurating the new times of grace and salvation in Jesus Christ.

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3. Christological Orientations

The Biblical readings of the Feast have a clear Christological- salvific orientation that forms the backdrop for contemplating the figure of Mary.

Micah 5:1-4a. The Prophet announces the coming of the Lord of Israel who will come forth from Bethlehem of Judah. The Mother of the Messiah, presented as one about to give birth, will give life to the prince and pastor of the house of David who will bring justice and peace. She will work with the Messiah to bring forth a new people.

Romans 8.28-30. This passage does not speak directly about Mary but about the believer justified by the grace of Christ and gifted with the indwelling of the Spirit. He or she has been chosen and called from all eternity to share Christ's life and glory. This is true in a privileged manner for Mary, Spouse and Temple of the Holy Spirit, Mother of God's Son, and intimately united with Him in a Divine plan of predestination and grace.

Matthew 1:1-16, 18-23. The meaning of this seemingly and genealogy is theologically profound: to place Jesus, the Messiah Lord, within the dynastic tree of His people. He is a descendant, and in fact "the descendant," of Abraham (cf. Gal 3:16) and the Patriarchs in accord with the promises, and He is the semi-heir of the Prophets. The ring that united Christ with His people is Mary, Daughter of Zion and Mother of the Lord.

The virginity stressed by the Gospel text is the sign of the Divine origin of the Son and of the absolute newness that now breaks forth in the history of human beings.

The Christological-salvific purpose and tone dominate not only the Bible readings but also the Eucharistic Celebration and the Liturgy of the Hours.

It has been observed that, although the texts of this Feast's celebration are less rich than those of other Marian feasts, they do have one outstanding characteristic: "The number of themes is rather restricted, [but] there are extremely numerous invitations to joy" (J. Pascher).

Indeed, joy pervades the whole of this Feast's liturgy. If many "will rejoice" at the birth of the precursor (cf. Lk 1:14), a much greater joy is stirred up by the birth of the Mother of the Savior. Hence, this is a Feast that serves as a prelude to the "joy to all people" brought about by the Birth of the Son of God at Christmas and expressed by the singing of hymns and carols.

Added to this theme of joy on this Marian Feast is that of light because with Mary's birth the darkness is dispersed and there rises in the world the dawn that announces the Sun of Justice, Christ the Lord.

<http://www.ewtn.com/saintsHoly/saints/N/nativityoftheblessedvirginmary.asp>

The Most Holy Name of Mary *September 12, 2018*

The feast of the Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary originated in Spain and was approved in 1513. In 1683, Pope Innocent XI extended the celebration of the feast day to the universal Church, to be celebrated on September 12th, four days after the Feast of the Birth of the Blessed Mother. With the revisions of the *Roman Missal* in 1970 following the Vatican Council II, the feast day was removed from the universal calendar, although the Votive Mass remained. However, Pope John Paul II in the third edition of the *Roman Missal*, issued in 2003, reinstated the feast day, technically as an “optional memorial.”

The name *Mary* is rooted in various ancient languages: in Hebrew *Myriam*; in Aramaic *Maryam*; in the Greek Old Testament, *Mariam*; and in Greek and Latin New Testament, *Maria*.

Modern philological studies of ancient Egyptian suggest that *Mary* means “lady, beautiful one, or well-beloved.” Some scholars of Ugaritic texts (ancient Syrian) suggest the name *mrym* derives from the verb *rwn*, thereby rendering the meaning of “high, lofty, exalted, or august.” These root meanings fit well with the message of the Archangel Gabriel: “Hail, Mary, full of grace [*or* Rejoice, O highly favored daughter]! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women” (Luke 1:28).

Of course, the name “Mary,” being the name of the Blessed Mother, deserves special respect and devotion, and is thereby celebrated in four ways: First, *Mary* is a name of honor, since the faithful praise Mary as the Mother of our Divine Savior; she is rightfully called “Mother of God,” for Jesus true God, second person of the Holy Trinity entered this world becoming also true man through Mary who had conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Second, *Mary* is a most holy name, because the very mention of her name reminds us she is full of grace, has found favor with God, and is blessed among all women. Third, *Mary* is a maternal name, because she is our Mother, whom our Lord gave to us as He was dying on the cross (cf. John 19:26-27). Finally, *Mary* is a name of the mother who responds to all of our needs, protects us from evil, and prays “for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.”

The holy name of Mary has been revered in many ways. St. Louis de Montfort (d. 1716) said, “The whole world is filled with her glory, and this is especially true of Christian peoples, who have chosen her as guardian and protectress of kingdoms, provinces, dioceses, and towns. Many cathedrals are consecrated to God in her name. There is no church without an altar dedicated to her, no country or region without at least one of her miraculous images where all kinds of afflictions are cured and all sorts of benefits received. Many are the confraternities and associations honoring her as patron; many are the orders under her name and protection; many are the members of sodalities and religious of all congregations who voice her praises and make known her compassion. There is not a child who does not praise her by lisping a ‘Hail Mary.’ There is scarcely a sinner, however hardened, who does not possess some spark of confidence in her. The very devils in hell, while fearing her, show her respect.”

Finally, the feast date of September 12th also has special significance. In 1683, the Moslem Turks, under the leadership of Sultan Mohammed IV, once again began their aggression against Christian Europe. Just a few years earlier, they had been stopped at Poland. A huge army of Muslim Turks, estimated at around 300,000, marched through Hungary (parts of which had been under their control for 150 years) towards Austria. They ravaged Hungary and were partly successful because of a Calvinist named Thokoly who incited rebellion against the Catholic rulers; for his traitorous dealings, Mohammed IV named Thokoly “King of Hungary and Croatia,” but with the understanding that he was simply a vassal to his Moslem overlord.

The Moslem aggression continued on to Austria. Emperor Leopold fled from Vienna. By July, 1683, the Grand Vizier Kara Mustapha laid siege to Vienna, defended by an army of only 15,000 Christians. The papal nuncio as well as Emperor Leopold begged King Jan Sobieski, who had defeated the Moslem Turks at the Polish borders and had earned the title “Unvanquished Northern Lion,” to come to their aid. Sobieski did not hesitate.

In August, Sobieski began his campaign. As he and his troops passed the Shrine to Our Lady of Czestochowa, they begged the Blessed Mother's blessing and intercession. At the beginning of September, they crossed the Danube and met with the German armies. On September 11, Sobieski was outside of Vienna with an army of about 76,000 men. The hussars lured the Moslem Turks into thinking they were on retreat, and then with reinforcements attacked. The Moslem Turks retreated, but were followed by Sobieski's calvary. The vanquished Moslem Turks fled Austria (but only after slaughtering hundreds of hostages). Vienna and Christian Europe were saved. The Moslem standard proclaiming "Death to the Infidel" was taken by Sobieski and delivered to the Pope.

Worshiping at a Holy Mass of Thanksgiving, Sobieski fell prostrate and with outstretched arms declared it was God's cause and praised Him for the victory saying, "*Veni, vidi, Deus vicit.*" meaning "I came, I saw, God conquered," which he also wrote in a letter to Pope Innocent XI. On September 12th, Sobieski triumphantly entered Vienna. Pope Innocent XI thereupon declared September 12th as a date to honor Mary, whose maternal intercession had saved Christendom just as it had over 100 years earlier at the Battle of Lepanto. As for Kara Mustapha, Mohammed IV had him strangled for being defeated by the Christians. Pause for a moment: Only the ignorant would not see the connection between September 11, 1683 and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

As we celebrate this feast day, let us remember the opening prayer for the Mass: "Lord, our God, when your Son was dying on the altar of the cross, He gave us as our mother the one He had chosen to be His own mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary; grant that we who call upon the holy name of Mary, our mother, with confidence in her protection may receive strength and comfort in all our needs." May our Blessed Mother continue to protect us, especially those Christians suffering under Islamic persecution this very day.

<http://catholicstraightanswers.com/what-is-the-origin-of-the-feast-of-the-most-holy-name-of-mary-september-12th/>

The Exultation of the Holy Cross *September 14, 2018*

Everyone who thoughtfully looks at a crucifix will find himself asking the same questions:

"Is it true? Did it really happen?"

The representation of our Lord upon the cross is one of the oldest and most widespread of the sacramentals. In every type of material, in every form and color sculptors and painters have represented the death of the God-man. In every size and shape Catholics carry a crucifix, place it in their homes and schools and institutions. Never do we want to forget that Jesus died for all of us. Never do we want to forget that He went to the lengths of love by dying for us. The crucifix tells us three things: Who suffered for us? What He suffered for us? Why He suffered for us.

Who is it hanging upon this cross?

It is the all-good Son of God who became Man for our redemption. It is the Creator of all things suffering for the creature. It is Holiness Himself hanging there. It is Love Himself hanging there.

That He was "truly the Son of God" is proven from the wonders that accompanied His death:

Darkness covered the earth from the sixth to the ninth hour. It was not an ordinary eclipse of the sun, because the moon was then at the full, because such an eclipse can last eight minutes at the most, and because there is no record in astronomy of an eclipse that year.

The veil of the temple was rent in two. (St. Matthew, 27:51.)

The earth quaked, rocks were rent, and graves were opened. (Same passage)

All these terrible happenings make us exclaim with the centurion: "Truly he was the Son of God."

What did Christ suffer?

His torments were so severe that the mere anticipation of them caused a sweat of blood. Our Lord suffered torture in every part of His body: He was scourged unmercifully. He was crowned with thorns. He was forced to carry His cross over a stony street. He was nailed through hands and feet. He suffered agonizing thirst. His mental sufferings also were extreme: There was the sense of love unreturned. There was ingratitude for His many favors and miracles. There was aching sympathy for His bereaved mother.

Why did Christ suffer?

He suffered in order to deliver us from our sins, from our deep debt - of punishment.

He suffered to reconcile us to God and to reopen the gates of heaven.

He suffered to make for us a satisfaction full and complete and most acceptable to God.

He suffered to leave us an example of every virtue.

To save man from the state of sin it was not absolutely necessary that God should demand such suffering. Christ could have saved us by a mere act of His all-powerful will. But He endured those terrible tortures to show us how precious we were to Him, and to give us a divine example, which we could imitate.

All these thoughts we read in every crucifix. No wonder we treasure the Figure on the cross. No wonder we place it everywhere to remind us continually of the things it teaches:

We place it above our altar to remind us that the holy sacrifice of the cross is repeated thereon.

We place it in our homes and bedrooms to remind us to live continually in the light of its lessons.

We hang the crucifix in our classrooms and buildings of mercy to show that all we undertake is done in and for Him who died on it.

We place it in our sickrooms and in the hands of our dying to remind us of the patience and forbearance of Christ crucified.

We carry it on our persons that we may carry out what it signifies.

We hang it on our Rosaries, we etch it on our books and doorways, we reach up and place it on the steeples of our churches, we place it everywhere in order that everywhere we might remember its life-giving lessons.

Make the most of this sacramental. Ask yourself:

"Is it true? Did it really happen?" Then also ask yourself: "What does it mean?"

"Who is that hanging there?" "Why did He suffer so?"

Your crucifix will answer those questions for you and bring you with the answers a more abundant spiritual life.

(Adapted from *Talks on the Sacramentals*, Rev. Arthur Tonne, O.F.M, 1950).

Rosh Hashanah begins Sunday, September 9 at sunset and ends Tuesday, September 11 at nightfall



Jewish man blowing the shofar, or ram's horn for the holiday of Rosh Hashana (New Year)

Several names are given to the Jewish New Year: *Rosh Hashanah* or Head of the Year, *Yom Hazikaron* or Remembrance Day, and *Yom Hadin* or Day of Judgment. Its function, therefore, is to serve as a day of recollection of the past, to judge one's conduct and ask God for mercy on the sins committed in the preceding year. A Messianic tone runs through the synagogue prayers for the feast, asking the Lord "When wilt Thou reign in Sion? Speedily, even in our days, do Thou dwell there, and forever."

Ten Days after the New Year comes the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, on which the Jews are to make their peace with God and man. There is a strict fast from sunset to sunset, and self-affliction for sin. The faithful are reminded to make peace with man before they can approach God for pardon. They must undo every wrong and restore anything of which they may have unlawfully deprived their fellowman. Symbolic of their struggles are the two he-goats, which the ancient law prescribed for sacrifice. One was to be offered to God as representing the forces in man, which are dedicated to the performance of God-given duties; the other was driven into the wilderness, a scapegoat, to carry away the sins of Israel into the unknown as a sign of expiation.

Jewish Indulgences?

The Catholic Church's doctrine on indulgences is a legitimate outgrowth of Jewish belief in an afterlife and an individual's final judgment before the throne of God.

Orthodox Jewish belief is that the final judgment is but the culmination of a series of annual judgments, which take place on Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement), the most important day in the Jewish liturgical year. Ten Days of Penitence also called the "Days of Awe" or the "High Holy Days" preceded the Day of Atonement. These Days of Awe are the first ten days of the month of Tishri, from Rosh Ha-Shanah, literally meaning "head of the year," or "New Year", to Yom Kippur. According to ancient belief, God keeps a record book of our actions, both good and evil. We are told that on Yom Kippur the souls of all living human beings pass before The Eternal One, and their fate is definitely decided—who shall live and who shall die; who shall rejoice and who shall sorrow; who shall prosper, and who shall wax poor; who shall be raised up and who shall be set down. During these first days of the New Year that God opens the book and writes therein the names of those who will live and prosper through the coming year.

The central theme of the Days of Awe is repentance, or *teshuvah*, literally meaning "returning to one's self." The preceding Hebrew month of Elul is set aside as a time for reflection and soul-searching in order that the Days of Awe might be entered into with the proper spirit. According to Jewish tradition, there are conditions necessary for *teshuvah*—regret for past negative behavior, willingness to confess sins before God and a resolve to amend wicked behavior. In the words of the Psalmist, "depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it" (Ps. 34:30). The opportunity to repent extends until the end of the tenth Holy Day, the Day of Atonement, when Jews fast as a sign of contrition.

The Rabbis tell us that while The Lord forgives man his sins against Heaven (after sufficient repentance on the mortal's part) He does not pardon transgressions man commits against his fellow men. These can be atoned for only by actual, definite steps to repair these wrongs, and by forgiveness on the part of those who have suffered these injuries.

"Live and let live," "Love thy neighbor as thyself," are sublime rules, which should govern our actions, and which the sounding of the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah should bring to mind.

Hillel was the spiritual leader of the Jews in the first century. He propounded the Golden Rule, saying: "Do not unto your neighbor what you would not have them do unto you; this is the whole Law; the rest is commentary."

Jews will visit the graves of their loved ones just prior to the Days of Awe in the belief that the deceased can intercede, before the throne of God in heaven, on behalf of the living. The living on earth would entreat the living in heaven to beg God to apply the merit of the righteous men and women of old to the unrighteous on earth.

This stems from the belief that when a person is in total submission to God and allows God to accomplish His will, in and through the individual, that person gains merit in the eyes of God. This merit is tangible and offsets, or atones, for the person's sins.

Since the righteous man and women of old lived such holy lives, it is believed that they gained more merit than what was required to atone for their own sins. This excess or surplus merit was stored in the “Treasury of Merit” and could be applied by God to benefit the living.

Saint Augustine described this concept as “the will and the performance.” What he meant is that for each and every beneficial act we do, we cannot take credit, because it is God accomplishing His will through us. We have free will and can reject the prompting or will of God. If we accede to the will of God in our lives, we gain merit and this merit atones for our sins.

These concepts are analogous to the Church’s belief in the Communion of Saints and the Treasury of Merit. The only basic difference between Jewish belief and Catholic belief is that Catholics believe that the Treasury of Merit is inexhaustible because of the atoning death of Jesus and the merits of Our Lady’s sinless life. It is through the application of the superabundant merits of Christ and the saints that indulgences are granted through the exercise of the power of the keys given to Blessed Peter and Peter’s successors.

Please keep in mind that this is not working your way into heaven, Catholic belief is that salvation is a free gift, which we receive at the time of our baptism. We cannot earn a free gift. We can lose our salvation by rejecting the gift. We do this when we reject baptism or commit serious sin with the full consent of the will and die in a state of unrepentance.

St. John of the Cross wrote, “In the end, we will be judged by our love.”

"Whereas the power of conferring indulgences was granted by Christ to the Church, and she has, even in the most ancient times, used the said power delivered unto her of God; the sacred holy synod teaches and enjoins that the use of indulgences, most salutary for Christian people and approved of by the authority of sacred councils, is to be retained in the Church; and it condemns with anathema those who either assert that they are useless, or who deny that there is in the Church the power of granting them."

Decree of the Council of Trent, Session 25, Dec. 4, 1563.

Mass Attendance

Only about a third of adult Catholics say they attend Mass every week and about four in ten attend Mass during any given week.

(Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University (January 10, 2005).

To many Catholics, Mass is often perceived as an obligation, something of a duty, a habit—maybe even a burden carried for the sake of guilt—that we might prefer to avoid in order to enjoy other things more immediately pleasant and satisfying. Some of this problem derives from the fact that the Church herself even states that we have an obligation to attend Mass.

It’s written in the Precepts of the Church. But when the Church speaks like this, the intent is to help us understand the bare minimum of what constitutes a Christian life. It’s a bit like specifying the *minimum* ingredients—flour, yeast, and liquid, for example—needed to make bread. Or it’s like saying that some sort of fluid intake is a necessary *minimum* to sustain life. But when you are told these things, they often seem like abstract and dull rules.

If, however, you were lost in a desert, dying of thirst, you would drag your body through hot, burning sand to reach a water hole. Water, in that case, would be no abstraction. It would be real. Well, instead of thinking about the Mass as an obligation, think of it like water in the desert, something real. Think of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. In the host you have *Faith*; you literally see the Father because “when you see Me you have seen the Father.” In the chalice you have *Love*, because what greater love is there than to shed your blood for another?

Once you see the *reality* of the Eucharist, rather than an abstract obligation, something will change. Instead of feeling pushed into doing something, you will feel drawn to your deepest desire. There is a big difference there.

When we're pushed, we either dig in our heels and resist or we become passively aggressive through laziness. That's human pride. But when we desire something we would fly, if we could, to get to it. That's what Catholic mysticism is all about. It's the desire for holiness. It's the desire to love.

You have within your heart that desire to love, but it has somehow been buried under pride because of what was lacking in your own childhood. When you were a child, abstract and dull rules were imposed on you, and you were left feeling empty and lazy. You did not experience religion as a matter of real love. Now, by the grace of God, you have the opportunity to embrace your faith and rediscover the love that God gave you in the beginning but that languished because it wasn't watered properly.

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The Saints on the Power of the Holy Mass

The Sacrament of the Eucharist is far more powerful for the sanctification of souls than all other spiritual means of grace," ~ St. Denis.

"You envy the opportunity of the woman who touched the vestments of Jesus, of the sinful woman who washed His feet with her tears, of the women of Galilee who had the happiness of following Him in His pilgrimages, of the Apostles and disciples who conversed with Him familiarly, of the people of the time who listened to the words of grace and salvation which came forth from His lips. You call happy those who saw Him...But, come to the altar and you will see Him, you will touch Him, you will give to Him holy kisses, you will wash Him with your tears, you will carry Him within you like Mary Most Holy." ~ St. John Chrysostom

"Not in vain do we at the holy mysteries make mention of the departed, and draw near on their behalf, beseeching the Lamb who is lying on the altar, who took away the sin of the world." ~ St. John Chrysostom

"The celebration of the Holy Mass is as valuable as the death of Jesus on the Cross." ~ St. Thomas Aquinas

"Man should tremble, the world should vibrate, all Heaven should be deeply moved when the Son of God appears on the altar in the hands of the priest." ~ St. Francis of Assisi

"When Jesus is corporally present within us, the angels surround us as a guard of love." ~ St. Bernard "If the Angels could envy, they would envy us for Holy Communion." ~ St. Pope Pius X

Near the end of his life, St. Jerome was brought the Holy Viaticum. The saint immediately prostrated himself on the ground in adoration as he was heard to utter the words of St. Elizabeth, and St. Peter, "How is this, that my Lord should come to me?" Luke 1:43 "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Luke 5:8

"The offering up of the Holy Mass benefits not only the saints for whom [in whose honor] it is said, but the whole Church of God in Heaven, on earth and in Purgatory." ~ St. John Vianney, The Cure' of Ars

"Oh, if we could only understand Who is that God Whom we receive in Holy Communion, then what purity of heart we would bring to Him!" ~ St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi

"When we go before the Blessed Sacrament, let us open our heart; our good God will open His. We shall go to Him; He will come to us; the one to ask, the other to receive. It will be like a breath from one to the other," ~ St. Jean Vianney.

"It would be easier for the earth to carry on without the sun than without the Holy Mass." ~ St. Padre Pio

"One single Mass gives more honor to God than all the penances of the Saints, the labors of the Apostles, the sufferings of the Martyrs and even the burning love of the Blessed Mother of God." ~ St. Alphonsus Liguori

"Put all the good works in the world against one Holy Mass; they will be as a grain of sand beside a mountain." ~ The Cure' of Ars

"O My children, how beautiful will that soul be in eternity, who makes frequent and good Communions!" ~ The Cure' of Ars, St. Jean Vianney

"When you awake in the night, transport yourself quickly in spirit before the Tabernacle, saying: 'Behold, my God, I come to adore You, to praise, thank, and love you, and to keep you company with all the Angels,' " ~ St. Jean Vianney

"The Holy Mass would be of greater profit if people had it offered in their lifetimes, rather than having it celebrated for the relief of their souls after death." ~

Pope Benedict XV

"The Lord came to the aid of each great tribulation with a special devotion. The devotion which God now sends to succor His Church is devotion to the most Holy Eucharist. It is the highest of all devotions." ~ Pope Leo XIII

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A single Mass offered for oneself during life may be worth more than a thousand celebrated for the same intention after death. St. Anselm, Doctor of the Church.

Benefits of Church Attendance

1. Church attendance is the number one predictor of marital stability (*Journal of Marriage and the Family*).
2. Attending church is helpful in the prevention of cancer, heart disease and mental illness (National Institute of Healthcare Research of America).
3. Teens who attend church are four times less likely to commit suicide (*Journal of Chronic Disease*).
4. Church attendees stay half as long in hospital stays (Duke University).
5. There is lower blood pressure among men who attend church verse those not (Duke University).
6. People attending church report a 50% higher weekly average family income (UCLA School of Medicine).
7. Church-goers have fewer heart attacks than non-church goers (National Institute of Mental Health).
8. Those who attend Church in their youth have about \$11,000.00 more in yearly income by their early thirties (UCLA School of Medicine).
9. Cities with high church attendance have the lowest crime rates (Crimes, Values, and Religion).
10. People attending church are physically healthier and less depressed (*American Medical News*).
11. Alcohol abuse is 300% less for those who attend church (UCLA School of Medicine).
12. Church attendance moves underprivileged out of poverty and into the middle class (The Impact of Religious practice on social stability).
13. There is an additional average life expectancy of seven years (*Demographic*, May 1999).

14. Those attending church are more likely to remain married and have a better sex-life (National Institute of Mental Health).

15. Those attending church are five times less likely to require antibiotics (Southern Medical Journal).

What If Jesus?

What if Jesus came to earth today instead of 2,000 years ago? Suppose God chose your town as Jesus' birthplace. Would He have been born in a garage instead of a stable? Would He wear jeans and a T-shirt or clerical garb instead of sandals and a tunic? Even the manner of His execution would be different. But none of that would matter. Jesus, and all that He taught would be the same, regardless of the year, the place or the people.

A typical day might be different, though, with Jesus comforting the bag ladies and appearing at the hospital emergency room, healing accident victims and maybe bringing some people back to life. Many would really be impressed and word about His great miracles would be headline news. He might even be interviewed for a TV special.

But, then, He'd overstep His bounds. He'd begin to forgive sinners. He'd go to abortion clinics telling the abortionists, aborted women and apathetic men that He'd forgive their sins if only they'd repent and sin no more. Well, that's too much!

Doesn't He know that *sin* doesn't exist in our culture? It's been replaced by personal *choice* and *privacy*. Who does He think He is, trying to impose His morality on us, trying to prick our conscience? So, the ACLU is summoned, whose lawyers do their usual good job of seeing that anything religious is kept as far from daily life as possible, and before long Jesus is condemned to death for being judgmental. He is killed, probably by a physician's lethal injection, but someone hears His last words: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

Times have changed but Jesus, the Savior, remains the same. He is steadfast in His unconditional love for us, and His invitation is still offered to the abortionist, the aborted woman and the apathetic father.

PRAYER

Prayer is the most exalted function in which man can be engaged, because it exercises the highest faculties of the soul, – the intellect and the will; it brings us into direct communication with the greatest of all beings, –God himself; it is the channel of heaven's choicest blessings; it excludes no one, it embraces all in the circle of its benedictions; it gives us access to our Heavenly Father at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. In a word, prayer renders us co-operators with our Creator in the moral government of the world, since many of the events of life are shaped in accordance with our pious entreaties. Conceive, then, the dignity of God's saints. The affairs of life are decreed from all eternity; and the eternal decrees themselves are in a measure, regulated by the prayers of His servants. "Prayer moves the Hand that moves the universe."

–James Cardinal Gibbons
