

## THE NATIVITY OF MARY AND DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

Sep, 8 2014

---

### SCRIPTURE READINGS OF THE DAY

**First Reading:** Mi. 5:1-4a **OR** Rom. 8:28-30

**Psalm:** Ps 12:6ab, 6cd;

**Gospel:** Mt 1:1-16,18-23 (**Mt. 1: 18-23**)

### SUGGESTED HYMNS:

**Entrance:** Beginning Today

**Communion:** My heart's like a flute

**Recessional:** *Any Marian hymn*: Holy Virgin

### INTRODUCTION

Today we celebrate the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Born in a Jewish society, that did not value women, she was chosen to be the mother of our Saviour, showing us God's great plan for women. Our church in India celebrates this feast as Girl Child Day inviting us to think, pray and work for a safer country for our girls.

### HOMILY HINTS

When God chose to send his Son into the world, to take human flesh, he chose a woman, Mary. This choice of a woman is indeed worth reflecting on because it indicates God's way of doing things which are extraordinary. In the choice of a woman to bear His Son, God also goes beyond the human concept of 'favoured gender.' Patriarchal Jewish society saw men as the superior race, but interestingly the genealogy of Jesus, indicates the presence of 4 women, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Mary, something unheard of in the Jewish genealogies. This indicates that God uses both men and women to play a role in the history of salvation.

Over the centuries, there has been a violation of the basic rights of women as persons. They are subjected to various forms of disrespect in society, especially in our own country. Rapes, abuse, female genocide, dowry, sexual exploitation, the list is endless. The trend is alarming. Nearly every day there are reports of sexual violence against women. The Badaun rapes and the subsequent reactions of our political class present a stark contrast on Mary's birthday and take us back centuries.



And yet, we see women playing an important role in the family and in society. While fulfilling their traditional responsibilities towards the family, they are also influential in different walks of life be it sports, politics, entertainment, and even in corporate ventures. Many have been able to break the glass ceiling in traditionally male bastions of power. All this has been possible because women themselves have worked hard to be recognized and also because they have received support from the families and loved ones.

What is needed is a change in attitude of men towards women and this begins in every home, where girls and boys are treated equally and given equal status. Men have to see women as complementing them and not as competitors or slaves.

In the Gospel today, we find Joseph who is betrothed to Mary and nearly breaking off the engagement because she is pregnant with child even before they come together. It is when he listens to the voice of the angel that he realizes his folly and brings Mary home to be his wife and gets ready to welcome Jesus into the world. . Mary did not indulge in despair, instead lived in faith, accomplishing her mission. God justified her hope, glorifying her as his beloved daughter and mother of his only Son. In society there are times when the woman is abandoned, and even ridiculed in situations where men are equally to blame.

When we listen to the voice of the prophet Micah today we see a sense of hope given by God because the people are suffering. We are called to listen to the voice of God in the treatment of the girl child, in respecting her, in loving her, in empowering her in whatever she would like to do.

In his letter to the Romans St Paul reminds us that God cooperates with all those who love him, and this love for God is reflected in our love and respect for the girl child. *(This will depend on which reading is taken from the options)*

In his Red Fort address on 15th August this year the Indian PM raised quite a few valid points: he drew attention to our manner of bringing up children, suggesting limits on their freedom; he challenged the bias against the girl child in our society. Among his promises, he proposed more toilets so that girls and women need not step out after dark...

On this Day of the Girl Child, we must try to get society to see every human birth as a call for new hope in the world. The love of two human beings has joined with God in continuing the work of creation.

Birthday celebrations bring happiness to the celebrant as well as to family and friends. Next to the birth of Jesus, Mary's birth offers the greatest possible happiness to the world. Each time we celebrate her birth we can confidently hope for an increase of peace in our hearts and a greater acceptance of the Girl Child in the world at large.

### **PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL**

**Cel:** Gracious God, as we celebrate the Birthday of Mary, the mother of Your Son Jesus, we come to you today to place before you our prayers and petitions, Our response is: **Lord, hear our prayer**

1. That the Holy Father, Bishops, Clergy and Religious may always raise their voices against crimes on the girl child and promote gender sensitivity in the Church... *(Pause)* we pray to the Lord...
2. That every member of the Church may grow more sensitive to the problems of girls and women and work towards their empowerment... *(Pause)* we pray to the Lord...
3. That every family may be driven to respect and love for all the members, so that boys and girls are treated equally at home...
4. That our new government may take a serious view of honour killings, caste based sexual violence and female foeticide which deprives the unborn of a chance to life and love... *(Pause)* we pray to the Lord:
5. That those responsible for human trafficking may experience a serious change of heart and recognize their own loved ones in the victims they deal with... *(Pause)* we pray to the Lord:
6. Let us bring to mind our personal needs, particularly the needs of girls and women in our parish. *(Pause)* we pray to the Lord:

**Cel :** Almighty God, we thank you for having listened to the prayers we make to you as we honour Mary. Grant what we have asked through Christ our Lord.