

THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (September 08, 2020)



The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary refers to the feast day celebrated on September 08 in honour of Mary, Mother of Jesus. Usually the Church celebrates the feast day of the saints on the date of their death, as this is truly their '*dies natalis*', the birth into everlasting life. However, there are three people whose birthdays have traditionally been celebrated by Christians, namely Jesus Christ, St. John the Baptist and the Blessed Virgin Mary. According to the Church fathers, the primary reason for the celebration of these birthdays is that all three were born without original sin. Yet another reason for this is found in the singular mission St. John the Baptist and Mama Mary had in the History of Salvation (Cf. Valentini, *Dictionary of Mary*, 1985). St. Augustine, for instance, relates Mary's birth with Jesus' saving work: "She is the flower of the field from whom bloomed the precious lily of the valley. Through her birth the nature, inherited from our first parents, is changed."

Saint Thomas Christians celebrate the feast of the Nativity of Mary with *Ettu Nombu* (eight-day lent) in remembrance of the birth of Mother Mary, during which believers participate in fasting and prayer. The Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health, (known as Sanctuary of Our Lady of Vailankanni), Tamil Nadu, and Our Lady of Good Health Shrine (or St. Mary's Basilica), Shivajinagar, Bangalore, are well-known Marian shrines in honour of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Pope Benedict XV recognised the Marian image in Senglea, Malta, under the title of *Maria Bambina*, honouring the nativity of the Virgin Mary (Cf. May 01, 1920).

When we celebrate our mother's birth, we do also honour Jesus. If Jesus is the perfect expression of God's love, Mama Mary is the foreshadowing of that love. If Jesus has brought the fullness of salvation, Mama Mary is "the dawn of salvation" (Pope Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, 1972). Let us thank God for the precious gift of Mama Mary, remembering that God has created you and me with love and with a call to be very special/unique in life.

Happy Feast and God's blessings to ONE and ALL!

Fr. Kurian Kachappilly, CMI
President, DVK