

Mass for the Start of the Homeschool Year – Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary – 9/8/16
Cathedral of St. Paul, Birmingham – Very Rev. Bryan Jerabek, J.C.L. – 10:00am – 585 words

Today, exactly nine months after the Feast of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception, we celebrate her Nativity, her birthday. Like a beautiful prelude piece played on the pipe organ before Mass, Mary's birth was a prelude for the big event, the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. She was the virgin who would give birth to the Savior, foretold by the prophet Isaiah, whose prophecy was quoted in the gospel we just heard. And hers is one of only three birthdays that we celebrate in our liturgical year, the others being of St. John the Baptist and, of course, of our Lord himself. What joy it brings us to celebrate her feast!

It's interesting that the readings that the Church gives us for this feast say nothing about Our Lady's birth; but, in fact, no passage in the Bible does. There was no major revelation or manifestation of God's glory that accompanied Mary's arrival in this world – and yet all of heaven rejoiced at the very moment that it happened. This truth teaches us something very important: the things that are most important to God are often small and unnoticeable to our weak perception. If only we could grow in wisdom and learn to see more clearly what truly matters and what is most important! That would be a good prayer for us on this feast day.

Mary's quiet appearance on the scene teaches us something else about how God works: even those for whom he has big plans have humble beginnings. All of us here had a humble start – to put it simply, all of us had to have our diapers changed! But who knows what God has in store for us; who knows what God has in store for you, young people here today? From humble beginnings God brought forth his holy Mother; even our Lord was born in humility; and so it was also with all of the saints down through the ages. Another prayer for today, then, is to ask God that from our lowliness he might do great things also, perfectly accomplishing his will.

So we begin a new school year under Our Lady's mantle and asking her for two important things: that we might be wise and grow in wisdom, so that we can see and understand what is most important in God's sight; and that the Lord might do great things also through us. All of this is the work of God's grace in us, just as it was in the Blessed Mother. Indeed, if her birth was a prelude for the coming of Christ, then our own birth is a prelude for how Jesus will continue his mission in some definite way in each one of us.

Have you ever thought about how Our Lady had to go to school also? She had to learn like everyone else! And her school was rather like yours, a homeschool, for back then everyone learned at home under the guidance of their parents and other relatives. So as you do your studies, remember that you are in good company; tell yourself, "if our dear Blessed Mother had to do this, I will do it also, and I will do it well, like she did". Then ask her, in prayer, to help you. And have great confidence in her, for she will pray to her son Jesus for you. Mary will help you to learn the things that are most important, so that God can do great things through you also.