
8 WEDNESDAY

BIRTHDAY of OUR LADY

Micah 5: 1-4

Ps 12: 6

Matt 1:1-16, 18-23

Today's gospel begins with a long list of names. Most of them are hard to pronounce, and there's only a few that we even recognise. At Mass, many priests omit this first part altogether, and go directly to the story of Jesus' birth. The list is 'boring', 'too hard to understand'. But, if the Holy Spirit inspired the very first words of the New Testament, the Good News, to be this list of Jesus' ancestors, maybe we should reflect on it a little more, and ask ourselves questions: Why is it there? Why do we not understand? Why do we feel bored? In most human cultures, ancestors and ancestor lists are very important and much respected --- at least, a person's *own* ancestors (maybe we also find other peoples' family trees boring). But we call Jesus our 'brother', and claim to belong together in the 'family' of God. So, surely we should have some interest in our Christian and pre-Christian ancestors, in our "fathers in faith". What the gospel tells us is that Jesus' birth is the fulfillment of God's promise to His people, a promise passed on through some really great men, leaders, kings, judges, but also through many unknown people, through "unimportant people", through sinners and scoundrels, through foreigners, through both holy and sinful women. In other words, Jesus really shared our ordinary very mixed-up ancestral pattern of good and bad people. And the implication is that His family continues to be like that --- we Christians, individually and as a family are very mixed indeed: good, bad, rich, poor, intelligent, stupid, kind and cruel, just like the rest of humankind, in fact, except that now "God is with us"

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