

Birthday of Our Lady 9/9/2026

As Christians, we should all be suffering from 'imposter syndrome'. Why me? Who am I to be chosen to continue the 'bloodline' going all the way back to Christ? We can have no presumptions here that we deserve to be Christian, no sense of entitlement that this is other than pure gift. Today's feast and readings make this clear. Jesus is born into a very mixed heritage, in a place and tribe least of the clans of Judah. The characters named are not necessarily holy in a conventional sense, or one might better say they do not earn their status as heirs in a conventional religious manner, one might almost say they break all the rules, and yet God honours his choice. Whatever the historical truth of the carefully delineated heritage, its writer is making a theological point which can give all of us hope that we too may become part of this God-given heritage, for:

'He decided beforehand who were the ones destined to be moulded to the pattern of his Son, so that he should be the eldest of many brothers (and sisters).'

This echoes Mary's wonder at her choice and the wonder, indeed, of so many others in the story of God's dealings with humanity, not least in his choice of Israel as a light to the nations. The flip-side to this is that such a choice of us by God is not a sinecure, not to be taken for granted, not an excuse for breaking God's commandments, not an excuse for sin. This matters now more than ever, when we see the State of Israel deliberately oppressing the non-Jews who inhabit the same land. The need for a Messiah, the need for conversion, remains. For if we extended this genealogy to today, it would continue to include people of many races and nations. We are, in this sense, all within the gift of God. Or, in the words of a footnote accompanying the reading from Paul's letter to the Romans:

'Christ, the image of God, is the primordial creation, has come now by a new creation to restore to fallen humanity the splendour of the image that has been darkened by sin.'

So it's both a gift and a responsibility. Mary is, in this sense, an archetype, chosen and made holy, but free to say 'yes' or 'no' to the gift.

Br John Mayhead
Monastery of Christ Our Saviour