



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

The Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Readings: Micah 5: 1-4 or Romans 8: 28-30, Ps 12, Matthew 1; 1-16, 18-23

'Consanguinity' is not a word that crops up often in homilies or indeed anywhere else for that matter. However, on such things do kingdoms rise and fall. Most of us, if we are interested in consanguinity (blood-relatedness) at all probably restrict our enthusiasm to watching, 'Who do you think you are?', where minor 'celebs' are moved to tears or effusions of joy by the sufferings and triumphs of their newly discovered ancestors.

(Much more interesting is the programme on wills where unsuspecting ordinary people find that they have come into a casual eighty grand courtesy of the late and unlamented great uncle Jack who died intestate and whom they last saw in 1974.)

There are a few fanatics who do this family tree thing for a hobby. They tend to be Yanks or Aussies desperate for some personal history. I have, courtesy of an Australian cousin, my mother's family back to the 1680s. In contrast my grandfather's side comes up against the impenetrable darkness of his vanishing act and the wholesale destruction of the Irish Census records.

There is no such problem with Our Lady as you will have heard at great length and forensic detail in the Gospel for today. Genealogies mattered hugely in

ancient society – who you were. What mattered in the line of Mary (or Joseph more precisely) is not that were politically or culturally important people – they were not – but that they fulfilled the prophecy, the Word of God.

Within this bloodline we see a wide variety of souls but the telling fact is that this line is part of the royal line of David. We know, as Herod discovered from his ecclesiastical advisors, that the prophet Micah talks of the Messianic line as being rooted in the royal house. ‘Ephrata’ is the little village near Bethlehem where the shepherd king David hails from. Jesus will be from the chosen royal line, fitting for the King of Kings.

The Gospeller is giving proof of the fulfilment of divine prophecy in Christ’s life. Remember, everything about Mary points to Christ. That is why she is the model for and mother of the Church.

There are some extraordinary characters in this line – there is no time for such detail. If you want something about Zerubbabel see me over coffee afterwards.

But there are some people about whom we know zip, nada, nothing.

And the great thing about genealogies is that they are as important as the famous. Each generation contributes its part to the climactic moment of bringing Christ into the world. Most of us, like our forebears, will make not even make a footnote in the history books. That does not matter a fig. What matters is whether we make it into the Book of Life which will be revealed on the Day of Judgement. Fame is no guarantee of fortune but faithfulness is.

Our Lady, chosen by God and preserved from original sin by the sacrifice of her Son, brought the Saviour into the world. She became the portal of salvation and presented and continues to present Christ to the world.

We are the last of a long line of sinners, set free from the curse of Adam, sin and death, by the Precious Blood of the Virgin's Son, have the same task. We are to present Christ to the world in our generation and represent Him in it. In our Baptism into Him we have ourselves acquired the royal bloodline and become part of the royal family, coheirs to the Kingdom.

Through the Holy Spirit, which overshadowed Our Lady at the Annunciation and which filled the Church of God at the Pentecost, both Our Lady and the Church have become the living shrines for the Creator of all.

As St. Andrew of Crete writes in today's Breviary office,
'Let the whole creation sing praise and dance and unite to celebrate the glories of this day. Let there be one common feast of those in heaven and those on earth. Let everything that is in the world and above the world join in rejoicing. Today a shrine is built for the Creator of the universe. The creature is made ready as a divine dwelling for the Creator.'