

THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

A CATHOLIC FAMILY FEAST DAY PACK



HIDDEN LIFE

FORMING MINDS, HEARTS AND HANDS IN THE SPIRIT OF NAZARETH.

HIDDEN LIFE:

LIVING THE LITURGICAL YEAR AT HOME



THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY



8 SEPTEMBER

"Today is born the Mother of God."

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MARY!

Today the Church celebrates something very simple and very beautiful: the birth of a little girl named Mary. She was born to St Joachim and St Anne, and although they could not yet have known all that God had planned for their daughter, Mary's birth was part of a wonderful plan that had been unfolding throughout salvation history!

This little girl would one day become the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Mother of God and the Mother of the Church. The Nativity of Mary reminds us that God often begins His greatest works in ways that seem very small.

Before Our Blessed Mother stood beneath the Cross, before she travelled to Bethlehem, before she said yes to the Angel Gabriel, there was simply Mary – a little girl, loved by her parents and prepared by God for a unique mission. Today, we rejoice in her birth.

So today, why not celebrate Mary's birthday as a family? Make something special for her, say a prayer, learn about her life, do something kind and thank God for the gift of Our Lady.

THE FEAST AT A GLANCE

Feast: The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Date: 8 September

Liturgical rank: Feast

Liturgical colour: White

Season: Ordinary Time

The Nativity of Mary

The word Nativity simply means birth. We celebrate several important births in the Church's calendar, including the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus at Christmas.

Today, on 8 September, we celebrate another very special birth:
the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Mary's birthday is celebrated exactly nine months after the feast of her Immaculate Conception on 8 December. The Church has celebrated Mary's Nativity for many centuries. Although Scripture does not tell us the details of Mary's birth, the ancient tradition of the Church tells us that Mary's parents were St Joachim and St Anne. Their daughter would become the Mother of the Saviour.

The feast therefore invites us to look back to the very beginning of Mary's earthly life and to rejoice in the woman whom God chose to play such an important part in our salvation.

For little children

Mary was once a baby too!

She had a mummy and daddy.

She grew up in a family.

She learned, played, prayed and helped at home.

And God had a very special plan for her life.

THE STORY OF MARY'S BIRTH

The Bible doesn't tell us the story of Mary's birth. What we know comes from the ancient tradition of the Church, particularly from the Protoevangelium of James, an early Christian writing.

According to this tradition, Mary's parents were Joachim and Anne. They had longed for a child for many years and prayed faithfully to God. In time, God blessed them with a daughter whom they called Mary.

We can imagine the joy that filled their home when she was born. A new little life had been entrusted to them, and although they could not have known all that God had planned for their daughter, Mary's life was already part of His great plan for the world.

She would grow up, learn from her parents, pray, work and live the ordinary life of a young Jewish girl. Then, years later, God would ask something extraordinary of her.

At the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that she had been chosen to become the Mother of the Saviour.

And Mary said yes!

But before she was the Mother of Jesus, before she stood at the foot of the Cross, and before she was honoured as Queen of Heaven, Mary was simply a little girl, born into a family who loved her.

That is what makes this feast so lovely for our own families.

God's greatest plans can begin in the quietest places – in a home, in a family, in the life of a child.

Today, we celebrate the beginning of Mary's earthly life and thank God for the gift of Our Lady.

ST JOACHIM & ST ANNE

Mary's Parents

Mary did not appear in the world without a family.

The Church honours St Joachim and St Anne as the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the grandparents of Jesus. They are wonderful saints for families to get to know because they remind us of something very important: God works through families. Jesus chose to enter the world through a human family. Mary grew up within a family. And the ordinary life of a home can become a place where holiness grows.

St Anne

St Anne was the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the grandmother of Jesus. According to the ancient tradition of the Church, she and her husband, St Joachim, longed for a child and prayed faithfully to God. When Mary was born, Anne had the joy of raising the child who would one day become the Mother of God. St Anne is especially loved as a patron of mothers, grandmothers and families. She reminds us that the quiet work of raising and teaching a child can have an importance far beyond what we can see.

St Joachim

St Joachim was the father of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the husband of St Anne. He is remembered as a faithful man who trusted God and remained devoted to prayer despite the difficulties he and Anne experienced in waiting for a child. As Mary's father, Joachim had the privilege of helping to form and guide the young girl who would one day give her fiat to God. St Joachim is a beautiful example for fathers and grandfathers, reminding us of the importance of faithfulness, patience and trust in God's plan.

Family reflection

What can we learn from Joachim and Anne?

That holiness begins with: loving your family, teaching your children, praying together, working faithfully, being patient, keeping your home peaceful and trusting God. The family home can be a school of holiness!

MARY: A GIFT TO THE WORLD

Why do we celebrate Mary's birthday?

At first, it might seem a little unusual that the Church celebrates Mary's birth when we don't actually know very much about the day she was born. But when you think about it, a birthday is a wonderful thing to celebrate. It is the day we remember that a particular person was given to the world. Mary's birth was the beginning of a life that would become part of the greatest story ever told. She would become the Mother of Jesus, and through her yes to God, she would have a unique part to play in our salvation.

Talk about it together

For younger children:

- What do you think Mary might have been like as a little girl?
- What would you give Mary if you could buy her a birthday present?
- What do you think made Mary happy?
- What is something you are thankful for about your own family?

For older children:

- Why do you think God chose to work through a family?
- Why do you think the ordinary parts of Mary's childhood were important?
- What does Mary's life teach us about the value of childhood?
- Do you think God has a plan for your life? What might that mean?
- What gifts or talents has God given you?
- How can you use those gifts to serve other people?
- What are some ordinary things you do each day that could become acts of love?
- Why is it important to remember that every human life is valuable from its earliest existence in the womb?
- What could your family do to make your home a place where everyone feels loved, valued and cared for?

A thought for the whole family

Take a moment to think about the people sitting around you. Each one is a gift from God. Thank Him for them today.

A LITTLE THEOLOGY FOR LITTLE HEARTS

What is the Immaculate Conception?

When we celebrate the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we are also reminded of another beautiful feast: the Immaculate Conception.

There is sometimes a little confusion about what this feast means. The Immaculate Conception does not refer to the conception of Jesus, it refers to Mary's own conception. From the very first moment of her existence, God preserved Mary from original sin. This was a special grace given to her by God because she had been chosen to become the Mother of His Son.

The Church teaches that Mary was “full of grace”. And this holiness did not mean that Our Lady didn't have a real human life. She still had to learn, grow, make choices, trust God...and she still had to say yes to Him.

Why did God prepare Mary in this way?

God had a special mission for Mary. She was to become the mother of Jesus Christ – God made man. Just as we might carefully prepare a special place for an important guest, God prepared Mary in a unique way for the role He had given her.

Mary's Immaculate Conception shows us something beautiful about God's grace: God gives us what we need to become holy. Mary received an extraordinary grace, but God gives each of us grace too. Through Baptism, prayer and the Sacraments, we are invited to grow closer to Him and to become more like Christ. We won't always get things right. We will make mistakes and sometimes choose badly. But God never stops calling us back to Himself. Mary shows us what a life completely open to God's grace can look like.

Think about it together

- What do you think it means to be full of grace?
- What are some ways that God helps us to grow closer to Him?
- Why can it be difficult to say yes to God sometimes?
- Can you think of a time when you had to choose between doing what was easy and doing what was right?
- Is there something in your life that you could place more completely into God's hands?

SCRIPTURE & SACRED READING

God's Plan for The Blessed Virgin Mary

The story of Mary's birth is not recorded in Scripture, but the Bible gives us several beautiful glimpses into Mary's life and her place in God's plan.

For today's feast, read one or all of the following passages together as a family. Take your time, and don't worry about explaining every detail.

Luke 1:26-38 – The Annunciation

Read the account of the Angel Gabriel visiting Mary and announcing that she would become the Mother of Jesus.

Talk about it:

1. What do you think Mary might have been feeling when the angel appeared to her?
2. What does Mary's response teach us about trusting God?
3. Is there something God might be asking you to say "yes" to in your own life?

Luke 1:39-45 – Mary Visits Elizabeth

Read how Mary travels to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who recognises the great thing God is doing through her.

Talk about it:

1. What does Elizabeth say about Mary when she sees her?
2. What does Mary's decision to visit Elizabeth teach us about helping others?
3. How do you think Mary and Elizabeth felt when they were together?

A little family thought

After your reading, take a quiet moment together. Perhaps light a candle, place a picture of Our Lady nearby and simply say:

"Mary, help us to treasure God's Word in our hearts as you did."



COLOUR MARY, ST ANNE & ST JOACHIM



As you colour, talk about:

- What kind of home do you think Mary and her family lived in?
- What do you think Mary would have enjoyed doing on an ordinary day?
- If you could spend one day with Mary in person, what would you like to do together?

Blessed Virgin Mary, pray for us.

A BIRTHDAY BOUQUET

Make something beautiful

Mary is often associated with flowers, particularly roses and lilies! Today, create a paper bouquet for Mary for her birthday.

You will need:

- coloured paper
- scissors
- glue
- sparkles or stickers
- pencils or crayons
- ribbon or string
- a small vase or jar



How to make it:

1. Cut flowers from coloured paper.
2. Decorate each flower.
3. On each flower, write something you would like to thank God for.
4. Add leaves and stems.
5. Tie your bouquet together with ribbon.
6. Place it beside an image or statue of Our Lady.
7. Sing Happy Birthday!

As you work, say:

"Mary, help us to love Jesus as you did."

For little ones

Don't worry about making it perfect.

Let your child tear paper, stick, scribble patterns and choose the decorations. The point is not the finished craft the point is making something beautiful for Mary.

A question to discuss

Why do you think Our Lady loves flowers so much?

FEAST DAY FOOD

Make the Day Special

Catholic families have traditionally marked important feasts with special foods. For Our Lady's birthday, prepare something you might reserve as a special meal for your children's birthdays.

A Birthday Feast - consider serving:

Fresh bread, seasonal fruit, a family favourite, a simple roast or pasta dish, homemade cake or cupcakes, and something special to drink. And, of course, a birthday cake for Mary!

You might decorate the table with:

🌸 Fresh flowers 🕯️ A candle 💙 White napkins or tablecloth 🌿 Herbs or greenery 💙 Blue ribbon or flowers 🌹 Roses or other flowers associated with Our Lady

Mary's Birthday Cake

Ingredients

- 175g butter
- 175g caster sugar
- 3 eggs
- 175g self-raising flour
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 tbsp milk

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C.
2. Beat together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
3. Add the eggs one at a time.
4. Fold in the flour.
5. Add the vanilla and milk.
6. Spoon into a lined cake tin.
7. Bake for approximately 25-30 minutes.
8. Allow to cool before decorating.

Decorate with icing and candles. And don't forget to sing: Happy Birthday, Mary!



LIVE THE FEAST

A Gift for Mary

Instead of buying Mary a birthday present, give her something she will love...an act of love!

Choose one:

- ☐ Help Mum or Dad without being asked
- ☐ Share something with my brother or sister
- ☐ Say a prayer for someone who needs it
- ☐ Tidy something that isn't my responsibility
- ☐ Pray the Rosary or a decade together
- ☐ Give someone an encouraging word
- ☐ Learn about the Nativity
- ☐ Make a bouquet for Mary
- ☐ Do something kind secretly
- ☐ Prepare a special meal
- ☐ Eat together as a family
- ☐ Sing a Marian hymn
- ☐ Forgive someone quickly
- ☐ Thank God for the gift of His Mother
- ☐ Make one family tradition

Remember:

Our Lady's birthday can become an opportunity for us to give something beautiful to God. That is the best gift we can give to our Heavenly Mother.



FEAST DAY MEMORIES

OUR LADY'S BIRTHDAY

The date: _____

Where we went: _____

What we made: _____

What we ate: _____

What we prayed: _____

My favourite part was:

Something beautiful I saw today: _____

Something I learned: _____

Something I want to remember: _____

Draw our feast day:

CONCLUSION

A LITTLE NOTE FROM ME

Dear family,

Thank you for inviting Hidden Life into your home!

I created these little feast day guides because I have come to realise just how much our children learn through the atmosphere we create around them. They may not remember every lesson we teach them, but they will remember the feast days we make special and the rich family traditions we set.

The Catholic Faith is not meant to be something we simply teach our children from a book, it is something we live. It is found in the ordinary days of family life, in our meals, our work, our conversations, our walks outside, our celebrations and our prayers. And the liturgical year gives us such a beautiful opportunity to bring all of these things together.

I hope these pages help inspire you to make feast days your own and establish personal familial customs. *But please (and I cannot express this enough) don't feel that you have to do everything.* You don't need the perfect craft, the perfect meal or a perfectly planned feast day. You don't need a beautifully decorated home or children who sit quietly through every activity. Perhaps today you simply go to Mass, sing Happy Birthday to Our Lady, eat something delicious together and say a Hail Mary before bed – that is enough. What matters is that our children grow up knowing that the Faith belongs everywhere.

So from my family to yours, I hope this feast day brings a little more beauty, a little more prayer and a little more joy into your home. May Our Lady draw your family ever closer to her Divine Son, and may she teach us all to live our own hidden lives faithfully, lovingly and joyfully.

Every blessing,
Eden McCourt



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