

Reflection Friday week 22 The Birthday of The Blessed Virgin Mary 2023

Saint Augustine described the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary as an event of cosmic and historic significance, and an appropriate prelude to the birth of Jesus Christ. *"She is the flower of the field from whom bloomed the precious lily of the valley."* The 4th century bishop, whose theology profoundly shaped the Western Church's understanding of sin and human nature, affirmed that *"through Mary's birth, the nature inherited from our first parents is changed."*

There is a principle that states the more physical a revelation is, the more perfect it is. Giving birth is a very special example of this. It is believed that the very first experience we have of God is our mother who gave birth to us.

We ought to thank God for Mary's parents, Anne and Joachim who raised her in such a way that she was able to say Yes to the Angel Gabriel when asked to be the Mother of Jesus and bring to us a physical sign of God's love: the God we call Emmanuel, God-with-us. For Assumptionists whose founder's name is *Emmanuel d'Alzon*, it is no coincidence that his christian name is God-with-us, Emmanuel. Nor is it a coincidence that we are called Augustinians of the Assumption. Mary asked him to take the name of the Assumption to be our protector and guide, asking us to spread God's love among the people of the world. We are truly blessed. The Assumption was the name of a school he inherited.

Pope Francis: *Mary offers three very important lessons: to experience the joy of Christ and share it with others; to never let adversity beat one down; and always help those in need with love and mercy. She encourages us to be joyful, help without hesitation and persevere. For whoever discovers Jesus will be "filled with an inner joy so great that nothing and no one can take it away."*