

*The Festival of Christmas Eve*

24 December 2014

*Concordia Lutheran Mission*

Terrebonne, Oregon

**“God’s Name is Immanuel because  
He was Born of the Virgin St. Mary  
in order to Give Men New Birth unto Life Eternal.”**

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

**Isaiah 7:14**

**Introduction**

Immanuel means “God with us”.<sup>1</sup> That means the child to which the Virgin St. Mary gave birth is God Himself.

Why would God undergo a human birth? God did so obviously not for His own sake because God has no need of any human experiences. Rather, God underwent a human birth for us, in order to give us a pure human birth. Now in Christ we have shed our sinful birth and gain the Pure Birth of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

This Pure Birth Christ gives to men through the Gospel, giving them re-birth to newness of life, life eternal, and the resurrection of the body.<sup>3</sup>

God was born of the Virgin St. Mary in order to give men birth unto life eternal.

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<sup>1</sup>The Hebrew reading of it goes like this: immanu (with us) el (God). “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” **St. Matthew 1:23.**

<sup>2</sup>“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” **Galatians 4:4-6.**

<sup>3</sup>“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection.” **Romans 6:4-6.**

## **I. God is Born of the Virgin St. Mary to Give Men a Pure Birth.**

### **A. Because of the fall of Adam, all men are born in sin and perish.**

Men do not enjoy a pure birth. David writes:

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.<sup>4</sup>

Men are fatally flawed from the outset, from conception. Because our conception is sinful and the wages of sin is death<sup>5</sup>, we all die. This terrible condition came about because of the fall of the father of all men, of all of us, Adam. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.<sup>6</sup>

### **B. God was born of the Virgin St. Mary in order to give men a pure birth.**

Because of this fatally flawed birth unto death, God in His Mercy was born of a woman in order to deliver us from our sinful birth. The prophet Isaiah writes in today's Old Testament lesson that God is born of a woman:

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.<sup>7</sup>

Immanuel means "God with us". The Apostle St. Matthew writes:

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>**Psalm 51:5.**

<sup>5</sup>"For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." **Romans 6:23.**

<sup>6</sup>**Romans 5:12.**

<sup>7</sup>**Isaiah 7:14.**

<sup>8</sup>**St. Matthew 1:23.**

God clearly is born of the Virgin St. Mary not to avenge Himself because of our sin. God needn't become man to condemn and punish us for our sins. God could simply do that by His Almighty Power. Rather, *God pressed His Almighty Power into the Service of fallen men and became man for us in order to deliver us from our sin.*<sup>9</sup> The Apostle St. Matthew writes:

But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.<sup>10</sup>

Christ saves from sin by delivering us from our sinful conception and birth. From the womb of the Virgin St. Mary Christ was Holy and without Blame. David writes of Christ's Perfect Righteousness and Holiness from the womb:

But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope *when I was* upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou *art* my God from my mother's belly.<sup>11</sup>

Once again David points out that, unlike the rest of us, Christ enjoyed a pure conception and birth because He worshiped God perfectly from the womb of the Virgin St. Mary. None of us have worshiped God from the womb of our mothers because we are conceived in sin. Christ, however, worshiped God perfectly from the womb and, thereby, enjoyed a Perfect or Immaculate Conception and Birth for us. Again, Christ undertook a human birth not for Himself – He after all is God and has no need of any human experience – but rather for us in order to give us an immaculate conception and pure birth. Luther writes:

Christ is born for you and ... his birth is yours, and come to pass for your benefit. For the Gospel teaches that Christ was born for our sake and that he did everything and suffered all things for our sake ... . Christ has a pure, innocent,

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<sup>9</sup>“He is called ‘Immanuel’ (Isa. 7:14), which means, if you interpret it, ‘God with us,’ *primarily* with regard to the *person*, because in the unity of His person He is God and man. ... *Secondarily*, with regard to His *office* He is called ‘Immanuel,’ because He is with us through His intercession before the heavenly Father, through His defense against all foes, and through His support and comfort in all adversities.” The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces, ... On the Person and Office of Christ*, tr. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009, pp. 26, 27.

<sup>10</sup>**St. Matthew 1:20-21.**

<sup>11</sup>**Psalm 22:9-10.**

holy birth. Man has an impure, sinful, damned birth, as David says in Psalm 51[:5] ... . There is simply no remedy for this except through the pure birth of Christ. ... Christ willed to be born so that we might be born in different manner ... . In this manner Christ takes to himself our birth and absorbs it in his birth; he presents us with his birth so that we become pure and new in it, as if it were our own, so that every Christian might rejoice in this birth of Christ and glory in it no less than if he, too, like Christ, had been born bodily of Mary.<sup>12</sup>

Christ went through all stages of human existence for us in order to give us a pure human life. The Evangelist St. Luke writes:

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.<sup>13</sup>

The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes:

Jerome Kromayer (professor of theology at Leipzig, d. 1670) ... says: Christ passed through all stages of our life in order that He might thoroughly heal our sinful conception and birth.”<sup>14</sup>

Finally, Christ passed through our death for our sins on the Cross in order to deliver us from it. David writes:

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.<sup>15</sup>

Jesus enjoyed an Immaculate Conception<sup>16</sup> and a Pure Birth not for His sake – He’s God and obviously has no need for any human experiences – but rather for us in order to deliver us from our sinful conception and birth and give us His Pure Birth unto life eternal.

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<sup>12</sup>*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 52, pp. 14, 15.

<sup>13</sup>**St. Luke 2:52.**

<sup>14</sup>*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 306.

<sup>15</sup>**Psalm 23:4.**

<sup>16</sup>Only Christ, not the Virgin St. Mary nor anyone else, was conceived Immaculately. “On December 10, 1854, Pope Pius IX defined that ‘the most blessed Virgin Mary was, in the first instant of her conception, by the singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of

## II. Christ's New Birth unto Life Eternal Comes to Men through Holy Baptism, i.e., the Gospel.

### A. Christ gives men New Birth through Holy Baptism, i.e., the Gospel.

Christ gives to men the Blessed Fruits of His Life for us through Holy Baptism. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.<sup>17</sup>

Through the Gift of Faith given in Holy Baptism comes the New Birth. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.<sup>18</sup>

Again, the Apostle St. Paul writes of the Newness of life through the Gospel<sup>19</sup>:

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the merits of Christ Jesus, the Savior of the human race, preserved free from every stain of original sin.' ... The dogma, in fact, is purely an outgrowth of Mariolatry ... , a logical consequence of the semi-divine position assigned to Mary. ... It is hardly necessary to point out that the Scripture knows of only One who was immaculate (2 Cor. 4, 21) and declares all other sinners (Rom. 3, 9-12; 5, 12), so that Mary also needed a Savior (Luke 1, 47).” *Concordia Encyclopedia*, eds. Fuerbringer, Engelder, Kretzmann, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927, p. 348, s. v. “**Immaculate Conception**”.

<sup>17</sup>**Galatians 3:26-27.**

<sup>18</sup>**Romans 1:16-17.**

<sup>19</sup>“But let us speak of the word *liturgy*. This word does not properly signify a sacrifice, but rather the public ministry, and agrees aptly with our belief, namely, that one minister who consecrates tenders the body and blood of the Lord to the rest of the people, just as one minister who preaches tenders the Gospel to the people, as Paul says, I Cor. 4, 1: *Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, i.e. of the Gospel and the Sacraments.* And 2 Cor. 5, 20: *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in God's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* Thus the term *leitourgia* agrees

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection.<sup>20</sup>

Like St. John the Baptist's Baptism, Holy Baptism gives the New Birth in Christ because it delivers to men the Fruits of Christ's Passion. The Apostle St. John writes:

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus Answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.<sup>21</sup>

The Apostle St. Peter states:

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.<sup>22</sup>

Luther writes of the New Life by the Gospel through faith:

Christ is born for you and that birth is yours, and come to pass for your benefit. For the Gospel teaches that Christ was born for your sake and that he did everything and suffered all things for our sake, just as the angel says here: "I announce to you a great joy which will come to all people; for to you is born this day a Savior who is Christ the Lord" [Luke 2:10-11]. From these words you see clearly that he was born for us. ... He does not simply say: "Christ is born," but: "*for you* is he born." Again, he does not say: "I announce a joy," but: "*to you* do I announce a great joy." Again, this joy will not remain in Christ but is for all people. ... Christ has a pure, innocent, holy birth. Man has an impure, sinful damned birth, as David says in Psalm 51[:5]: "Behold, in sin am I fashioned in

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aptly with the ministry." *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV. (XII.): Of the Mass, Of the Term Mass.* 80, 81, Triglotta, p. 411.

<sup>20</sup>**Romans 6:3-5.**

<sup>21</sup>**St. John 3:3-5.**

<sup>22</sup>**Acts 2:38.**

the womb, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” There is no remedy for this except through the pure birth of Christ. Now the birth of Christ cannot be distributed physically, even as that would not be of any help either. For this reason it is distributed spiritually, by means of the word, to everyone, as the angel says, so that all who firmly believe that it is given to them in this manner shall not be harmed by their impure birth; this is the manner and means to become cleansed from the stain of the birth we have from miserable Adam. Christ willed to be born so that we might be born in different manner, as he says in John 3[:3-6]. This happens through that faith, as James 1[:8] says: “He has born us of his own will through his word of truth, so that we begin to be his new creation.” In this manner Christ takes to himself our birth and absorbs it in his birth; he presents us with his birth so that we become pure and new in it, as if it were our own, so that every Christian might rejoice in this birth of Christ and glory in it no less than if he, too, like Christ, had been born bodily of Mary. ... Therefore see to it that you derive from the Gospel not only enjoyment of the story as such, for that does not last long. Nor should you derive from it only an example, for that does not hold up without faith. But see to it that you make his birth your own, and that you make an exchange with him, so that you rid yourself of your birth and receive, instead, his. This happens, if you have this faith. By this token you sit assuredly in the Virgin Mary’s lap and are her dear child. ... This is the great joy, of which the angel speaks, this is the consolation and the superabundant goodness of God, that man (if he has this faith) may boast of such treasure as that Mary is his real mother, Christ his brother, and God his father.<sup>23</sup>

## **B. The New Birth of the Gospel gives life everlasting.**

Through the Gift of Holy Baptism, Christ gives to men the Gift of life everlasting. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.<sup>24</sup>

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>23</sup>*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 52, pp. 14, 15, 16.

<sup>24</sup>**Titus 3:4-7**, underscore added.

Christ is God with us in the flesh – “pleased as man with man to dwell/Christ, our Immanuel”<sup>25</sup> – because God became man to be born of the Virgin St. Mary in order to deliver us from our sins.

This Blessed Work Christ accomplished by His Pure Conception and Birth. This Pure Conception and Birth He gives to us through the Gift of Holy Baptism.

From this Pure Conception and Birth through Holy Baptism springs the Gift of life eternal and the resurrection of the body.

*Amen.*

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<sup>25</sup>Hark the Herald Angels Sing, *The Lutheran Hymnal*, #94, stanza 2, verse 4.