

Solemnity of Mary – Circumcision of Jesus  
January 1, 2012 - Cycle B

*“An Eight Day Wonder”*

We are celebrating the Octave of Christmas. Today is the last day of the Octave. The Octave started last Sunday, Christmas Day, and includes today the eighth day after Christmas. The octave celebrations have their roots in Jewish practices which were then copied in the early Church, but with a Christian perspective.

The Christmas Octave means that starting with Christmas Day, every day after Christmas Day is a celebration of Christmas Day up to and including the eighth day.

When Jesus was born, in good Jewish style, eight days were designated to celebrate His birth. So in a manner of speaking and in ritual practice, the Jewish families celebrated each day as a birthday. Then came the eighth day. The eighth day had a double meaning. It was first of all, the last day

celebration of the birth of Jesus.  
Secondly,

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since it was the last day celebration it took on a special significance; instead of just celebrating a birth, the birth took on new meaning derived from the name of the child. On the eighth day, in good Jewish style, the child was circumcised and named. The name gave a special direction to the life of the child. The child was given the name “Jesus,” the name the angel had given Him before he was conceived. The name Jesus implies that the child would take on the direction of being Saviour, Son of God, Son of Mary, Redeemer, Messiah, Lord. His name, Jesus, meant that He would save His people, and all who would believe in Him.

One fellow in the parish commented that he thought that the eighth day after Christmas was Epiphany. I explained, “no,” that the Epiphany is the twelfth day after Christmas. The eighth day is the day of Circumcision, the day of naming the child.

We also call the eighth day, the Solemnity of the Motherhood of Mary. We honor Mary as Mother of

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the Saviour, Mother of Jesus who is Son of God, Lord, Messiah, and Redeemer.

Now we move to the end of Jesus' life. There is a special octave, a special eight day occurrence.

On Palm Sunday Jesus enters Jerusalem as King, as God, as Sacrifice. He enters Jerusalem as royal Son of the royal line of David. Jesus enters Jerusalem also as Son of God; His miracles attest to His Divine Power; so do His divine words. He enters as Sacrifice; His love for all of us cost Him His life. Every day for a full week, for a full eight days, Jesus is living out His role as King, God, and Sacrifice. We call these eight days, Holy Week. It is the same themes each day that week. Pontius Pilate admits with a question, "So you are a King?" The leaders of Jerusalem convict Jesus of claiming to be God. And Jesus is led to the sacrifice of the cross. Then on the Eighth Day, Jesus is given a new direction, a

new dimension; on the eighth day Jesus rose from the dead. The meaning of His resurrection is cosmic. All

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creation suddenly has an eight day meaning, all creation takes a step from sin to redemption and from death to life, life in the resurrection. Yes, on that eighth day, not only did Jesus change, but Jesus changed all creation with Him. Life moved on to a new dimension, to a new day of creation. All life moved on to an eighth day event, the Day of Resurrection.

Now the same fellow in the parish asked me if there were now eight days in the week. I said, “no.” The “eight day title” simply gives the seventh day a new meaning, a new direction, just like the octave of the birth of Jesus did when He was born; just like Easter Sunday does for Holy Week.

There is an old expression which comes from antiquity, “eight day wonder.” And that is what Jesus was and is. That’s what the octave of

Christmas means. That's what Holy Week means:  
"Jesus is an eighth day wonder."

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So we pray: *Lord Jesus, Your birth, life, and death changed all of us, and all of creation. Thank you for what You accomplished for us in the two, eight day experiences. Hear our prayer for You live forever and ever. Amen.*

Rev. A. J. Geraci  
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