

September 2016

Last month, I shared some reflections on the Anglican hymn “Ye watchers and ye holy ones.” For September, the month of the feast of the nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (4<sup>th</sup> September), here are some verses on Mary’s birth and childhood by Bishop Thomas Ken, Bishop of Bath and Wells from 1684-91. They come from a long poem on Mary, most of which is generally forgotten, though a few verses are well known in the Church of England today as “*Her virgin eyes saw God incarnate born.*”

It is worth taking special note of Bishop Ken’s insistence on the initiative and grace of God in preparing the one whom he would choose to play such a vital part in the work of our redemption. Never underestimate the importance of the influences that surround the young, and among them of course especially the role of mothers. That was as true of Mary and Jesus as it is of any other mother and child. So praise God for Mary’s own childhood and the influences which under grace enabled her to care for the incarnate Word of God, nurturing him, and teaching him to pray and revere his heavenly Father. But equally thank God for those who have brought you to faith and have nourished you. Pray too for God’s grace to help you support those close to you, that they too may realise the dignity and joy of being children of God.

*GOD, Who is pleased bright Angels down to send,  
On purpose little children to attend;  
When blessed Mary first drew vital air,  
Entrusted her to a bright seraph’s care.*

*The aged Saints, who for a child had pray’d,  
Sang hymns to God when joyful parents made;  
Devoted God’s free gift to God alone,  
And more God’s child esteem’d her than their own.*

*The Holy Ghost His temple in her built,  
Cleansed from congenial, kept from mortal guilt;  
And from the moment that her blood was fired,  
Into her heart Celestial Love inspired.*

*The babe, when she began to speak, was taught  
To consecrate to God her tongue and thought,  
And, prompted by her seraph, took delight  
Continual hallelujahs to recite.*