Perfectly Imperfect

By human reckoning, Matthew as a publicist easily gets a thumbs-down in his version of portraying Jesus as the Messiah. We expect him to draw a long list of distinguished ancestors but all we get are mostly "unknowns" and only a few great men. The big names are there (Abraham, Isaac, and David) but a closer look reveals them as men with feet of clay and not as guileless as we expect them to be. Why does Matthew come up with a lackluster lineage for Jesus? Worst of all, why does he include female relatives like Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, and Ruth, all of whom played roles that are traditionally looked down on?

To paint an honorable heritage of a perfect Messiah is farthest from Matthew's mind. True, Jesus' genealogy is considered by the Jews to be anomalous (with the inclusion of women, a clear break from revered tradition) and therefore unacceptable (if not reprehensible), but we glean in Matthew's consciousness a desire to proclaim the truth that with the birth of Jesus, big new things are happening; therefore, people cannot get stuck in the past. With Jesus' birth, a new era has begun and we are all invited to look at life in general through a new perspective.

This genealogy is said to be contrived, with Matthew artificially weaving three sets of fourteen generations, and perhaps leaving out other ancestors. Numbers in the Bible bear great significance. Fourteen is twice seven, which is considered to be the perfect number. When numbers are substituted for the Hebrew letters that spell out "David," the sum is fourteen. The number three is a form of emphasizing a truth as beyond question or doubt. Hence Matthew's version of Jesus' genealogy is making a powerful statement: the hand of God is in this big family, and his work is beyond any doubt thrice as double perfect. Talk about absolute perfection!

Jesus is called "Son of David." It is David's name written over all the forty-one generations but the list surprisingly stops at Mary's son, Jesus. It is a sign that the prophecy of a Savior who is about to come is finally fulfilled in the baby Jesus, the long-awaited descendant of David. After Jesus, no names are added because the promise—and the perfection—of God is fulfilled in his person.

Matthew writes for the Christian converts living in Antioch. Spiritually, these converts are considered to be "rootless," having been cut off from their old beliefs and ethnic ties. The evangelist takes great pains presenting to the converts that Jesus as Son of God enters into the gamut of human family and that Jesus did not exempt himself from belonging to a checkered history, to a lineage that dwelt in both lights and shadows. The Son of God embraces all of humanity—broken and healed, sinners and saints—and is not afraid to walk in our streets. Despite the weaknesses and sins of men and women, God's plan is unfolding! Advent is a joyful season when we can take a second look at our families and see them hopefully as Jesus looks at us—always with hope and charity, emphasizing our lights over our shadows, and telling us how it is all right, just perfectly all right, to be at home with the infant at the manger, and discover how to become a child all over again, so that we can bring hope to our families.

Fr. Paul Marquez, SSP
THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon
[Cf. Is 49:13]  
(Recited when there is no opening song)

Rejoice, O heavens, and exult, O earth, for our Lord will come to show mercy to his poor.

Greeting
(The sign of the cross is made here)

P — Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
All — And with your spirit.

Introduction
(The priest may address the assembly with these or other similar words)

P — Today's Gospel presents the genealogy of our Lord Jesus. The evangelist Matthew tells us that the culmination of Israel's history is the coming of the Messiah. In Jesus, the history of salvation finds its fullness and ultimate meaning.

Penitential Act

P — Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries. (Pause)

All — I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, (strike your breast) through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

P — May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.
All — Amen.

P — Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy.

P — Christ, have mercy.
All — Christ, have mercy.

P — Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

All — Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect

P — Let us pray. (Pause)

Creator and Redeemer of the human race, it was your holy will that your Word should take flesh in the womb of the ever-Virgin Mary. Look with kindness on our prayers and grant that your only Son, who came to share our human nature, may lead us to share in his divine life.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.
All — Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading [Gn 49:2, 8-10]  
(Sit)

Jacob prophesies that from his son Judah will come the dynasty that will rule Israel. Despite the weaknesses of Judah and his descendants, God makes good his plan. From Judah comes the house of David, and eventually the Messiah.

A reading from the Book of Genesis

JACOB called his sons and said to them: "Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob, listen to Israel, your father.

You, Judah, shall your brothers praise—your hand on the neck of your enemies; the sons of your father shall bow down to you. Judah, like a lion's whelp, you have grown up on prey, my son. He crouches like a lion recumbent, the king of beasts—who would dare rouse him? The scepter shall never depart from Judah, or the mace from between his legs, while tribute is brought to him, and he receives the people's homage."

— The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 72)

R — Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

sr. m.c.a. parco, fsp

Justice shall flourish in his time and fullness of peace for e-ver......

1. O God, with your judgment endow the king,/ and with your justice, the king's son;/ he shall govern your people with justice/ and your afflicted ones with judgment. (R)

2. The mountains shall yield peace for the people,/ and the hills justice./ He shall defend the afflicted among the people,/ save the children of the poor. (R)

3. Justice shall flower in his days,/ and profound peace, till the moon be no more./ May he rule from sea to sea,/ and from the River to the ends of the earth. (R)

4. May his name be blessed forever;/ as long as the sun his name shall remain./ In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed;/ all the nations shall proclaim his happiness. (R)
All — Alleluia, alleluia. 0 Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love: come to teach us the path of knowledge! Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Mt 1:1-17)

P — A reading from the beginning of the holy Gospel according to Matthew
All — Glory to you, O Lord.

THE BOOK of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham became the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah became the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar. Perez became the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab. Amminadab became the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab. Boaz became the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. Obed became the father of Jesse, Jesse the father of David the king.

David became the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon became the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asaph. Asaph became the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father of Uzziah. Uzziah became the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. Hezekiah became the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amos, Amos the father of Josiah. Josiah became the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the Babylonian exile.

After the Babylonian exile, Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abiud. Abiud became the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor the father of Zadok. Zadok became the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud, Eliud the father of Eleazar. Eleazar became the father of Matthew, Matthew the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ.

Thus the total number of generations from Abraham to David is fourteen generations; from David to the Babylonian exile, fourteen generations; from the Babylonian to the Christ, fourteen generations.

— The Gospel of the Lord.
All — Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (Sit)

Prayer of the Faithful (Stand)

P — We bring our petitions before the heavenly Father, who in his great love for us has sent his Son, so that we may be saved and come to the knowledge of truth. With confidence, we pray:
R — Lord, hear our prayer.
C — That the Church, embracing saints and sinners alike in her bosom, may strengthen herself by encouraging her children to incessantly pursue the path of penance and renewal, we pray: (R)
C — That we may allow neither the sins and scandals in our family life and in the Church nor the corruption in our community and society to overcome the goodness and goodwill in our hearts, we pray: (R)
C — That members of families who are separated by distance, misunderstanding, or apathy may experience homecoming, reconciliation, and togetherness this Christmas, we pray: (R)
C — That our participation in the Misa de Gallo may promote among us a spirituality of communion, enabling us to share the joys and sufferings of our brothers and sisters in the community and in the parish, we pray: (R)
C — That those who have died may be forgiven of their sins and rest in peace in the Kingdom of God, we pray: (R)
C — Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions (pause), we pray: (R)
P — Father, you decreed, and your Word became man, born of the Virgin Mary. May we follow the example of Christ who humbled himself to save us from our sins.
You who live and reign for ever and ever.
All — Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Presentation of the Gifts (Stand)

P — Pray, brethren...
All — May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P — Lord, sanctify the gifts of your Church, that through these sacred mysteries our life may be renewed by the true bread from heaven.
We ask this in the name of Jesus our Lord.
All — Amen.

Preface (Advent II)

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.
P — Lift up your hearts.
All — We lift them up to the Lord.
P — Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All — It is right and just.
P — It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.
For all the oracles of the prophets foretold him, the Virgin Mother longed for him with love beyond all telling, John the Baptist sang of his coming and proclaimed his presence when he came.
It is by his gift that already we rejoice at the mystery of his
Nativity, so that he may find us watchful in prayer and exultant in his praise.

And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim:

All — Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. (Kneel)

Acclamation (Stand)

All — We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord’s Prayer

All — Our Father... 
P — Deliver us, Lord... 
All — For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever.

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion (Kneel)

P — Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All — Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon

(Cf. Hg 2:7)

Behold, the Desired of all the nations will come, and the house of the Lord will be filled with glory.

Prayer after Communion

(Stand)

P — Let us pray. (Pause)

God of power, you have fed us with heavenly gifts. Fill us now with this desire: that, aflame with your Spirit, we may shine like stars in the heavens at the coming of Christ your Son, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

All — Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P — The Lord be with you.

All — And with your spirit.

Prayer over the People

P — Bow your heads and pray for God’s blessings. (Pause)

Look with favor on your family, O Lord, and bestow your endless mercy on those who seek it: and just as without your mercy, they can do nothing truly worthy of you, so through it, may they merit to obey your saving commands.

Through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

P — And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (†) and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.

All — Amen.

Dismissal

P — Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.

All — Thanks be to God.

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