

Sunday Message

MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

THE WORD

Year A • 1 January 2023 • Psalter Week 2

THEOTÓKOS

(LUKE 2:16-21)



Imagine how bewildered Mary must be. She has just given birth to her baby in a cattle shed, of all places. This baby, she has been told, is God's own Son. And now some local shepherds have turned up with a most extraordinary tale – how an angel of the Lord had appeared to them and told them of the birth of the saviour and that they would find him in a stable.

Mary watches as the shepherds pay homage to her child and listens to them as they leave, glorifying and praising God.

No wonder today's Gospel tells us that Mary ponders these things in her heart. It must have been so hard to take in, make sense of, and come to terms with. Here she is, a young teenager from an average background, and she is the mother of God's Son. Here she is, nursing her newborn in a miserable outhouse, and strangers are coming to pay him homage.

Overwhelming as her situation may be, Mary does not panic. She does not back away from God's will for her.

On the eighth day, she and Joseph take the child to be circumcised, and they give him the name the angel had told her to give him. They call him Jesus.

Mary is fulfilling God's plan for her. She does what God has asked her to do. ■

SAY

“Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

LEARN

Today's feast is always celebrated on 1 January. While it has its origins in the Eastern Church, the feast was celebrated in Rome by the fifth century AD. By the late Middle Ages, it was celebrated in the Western Church under the title of the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ. After the Second Vatican Council, Pope St Paul VI replaced the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ with the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God.

In AD 431, the Church gave Mary the wonderful title of *Theotókos*. It is a Greek word which means “God-bearer”. In the Western Church, this title was translated into Latin as *Mater Dei* or “Mother of God”. Unfortunately, it is not an exact translation and usually needs a lot of explanation for English speakers. God is eternal and does not have a source. So the title *Theotókos* does not mean that Mary is the mother of God from eternity. She is the mother of Jesus, who is the incarnate Word of God. It is a profound title that says something about Jesus and about Mary in relation to Jesus. Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God. Mary is his mother and, as such, can be venerated as *Theotókos*.

DO

Take some time to think about Mary and the place she occupies in your own spirituality and Christian faith.



PRAY

As Christians, we are called to imitate Mary, our mother and model. We are called to say yes to God's plan for us, whatever it may be and wherever it may lead. Pray for the strength to say yes to God in your life.

REFLECT

The ritual of circumcision and naming of Jesus establishes and proclaims his identity. We have our Catholic rituals (Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation), which establish and proclaim our identity as followers of Jesus. Secularism and loss of faith have eroded the meaning of such rituals and turned them very often into meaningless and superficial social rites of passage characterised by wasteful excess.

The memory of Jesus' naming and circumcision is a challenge to all of us who take our faith seriously. How do we recover a sense of God's presence in our everyday lives? Where is the mystery to be found among us? What have we lost by devaluing and desacralising our rituals? As you think about these questions, let God guide you to reclaim and proclaim more profoundly your identity as a disciple of Jesus. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Hail, Holy Mother, who gave birth to the King,
who rules heaven and earth for ever.
or

Today a light will shine upon us, for the Lord is born for us;
and he will be called Wondrous God,
Prince of peace, Father of future ages:
and his reign will be without end.

GLORIA

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

O God, who through the fruitful virginity of Blessed Mary bestowed on the human race the grace of eternal salvation, grant, we pray, that we may experience the intercession of her, through whom we were found worthy to receive the author of life, our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Numbers 6:22-27

A reading from the book of Numbers.
The Lord spoke to Moses and said, "Say this to Aaron and his sons: 'This is how you are to bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them:

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the Lord let his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
May the Lord uncover his face to you and bring you peace.'

This is how they are to call down my name on the sons of Israel, and I will bless them."

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 66

Response:
O God, be gracious and bless us.

- O God, be gracious and bless us and let your face shed its light upon us. So will your ways be known upon earth and all nations learn your saving help. (R.)
- Let the nations be glad and exult for you rule the world with justice. With fairness you rule the peoples, you guide the nations on earth. (R.)
- Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you. May God still give us his blessing till the ends of the earth revere him. (R.)

SECOND READING Galatians 4:4-7

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Galatians.

When the appointed time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law and to enable us to be adopted as sons. The proof that you are sons is that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts: the Spirit that cries, "Abba, Father", and it is this that makes you a son, you are not a slave any more; and if God has made you son, then he has made you heir.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
At various times in the past
and in various different ways,
God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets;
but in our own time, the last days,
he has spoken to us through his Son.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Luke 2:16-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

The shepherds hurried away to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds had to say. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; it was exactly as they had been told.

When the eighth day came and the child was to be circumcised, they gave him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before his conception.

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

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
(all bow during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O God, who in your kindness begin all good things
and bring them to fulfilment,
grant to us, who find joy in the Solemnity of the holy Mother of God,
that, just as we glory in the beginnings of your grace,
so one day we may rejoice in its completion.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today,
and for ever.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We have received this heavenly Sacrament with joy, O Lord:
grant, we pray,
that it may lead us to eternal life,
for we rejoice to proclaim the blessed ever-Virgin Mary
Mother of your Son and Mother of the Church.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.