

Read



Numbers 6:22-27

Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:16-21

LIVING THE WORD

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

January 1, 2020



REFLECTION

Imagine all that Mary held in her heart. Like any parent, Mary fed Jesus when he was hungry, wrapped him in blankets when he was cold, and comforted him when he was frightened. Mary shared family stories with Jesus and was the first to teach him his childhood prayers. Mary helped Jesus take his first steps, form his first words, and was present for the beginning of his public ministry at the wedding at Cana. Mary was even there as her son walked the road to Calvary and took his final breaths. Mary mothered Jesus from conception until death.

We are fortunate that Mary, the Holy Mother of God is also the Mother of the Church. This means that Mary mothers each of us, just like she did for Jesus. Mary is with us during the moments of our greatest joy, as well as the times when we feel totally inadequate. Mary rejoices with us, laughs with us, and mourns with us. Mary knows each of us intimately, for she is our mother and we are her children.

As we celebrate today's solemnity, let us rejoice in the great witness of Mary who radiates the love of God by her life.



ACTION

Take some time this week to pray the Rosary, a special Marian devotion. Each decade highlights an important aspect of Jesus' life, many of which are directly connected to Mary, the Holy Mother of God. As you pray, think about the role of Mary in Jesus' life as Mother of God. Also, be sure to consider how Mary continues to serve as Mother of the Church and all people in our world today.



<http://comepraytherosary.org/>



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Why do you think Mary receives such a special place of honor in our Catholic tradition?
- ❖ What qualities in Mary do you wish to emulate?



January 1, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

LECTIONARY #18ABC

Numbers 6:22-27

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Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:16-21

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

The great celebration of Christmas continues today with a special focus on Jesus' mother, Mary. We hear about shepherds, the first witnesses of the newborn Christ. They share the news with others while Mary contemplates the entirety of the reality and mystery of what she has been experiencing within her heart.

Q FOCUS: *Mary reflected upon the mysteries in her heart.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Today the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. It is a special liturgical observance in which we honor Mary's unique role as the Theotokos (Greek for "God-Bearer"), the Mother of God.

Church Teaching Connection

"The contemplation of Christ has an *incomparable model* in Mary. . . . The eyes of her heart already turned to him at the Annunciation, when she conceived him by the power of the Holy Spirit. . . . The memories of Jesus, impressed upon her heart, were always with her" (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 10-11).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 2:16-21

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

Merry Christmas! We rejoice, for a child has been born unto us! A light has shown in the darkness and God has taken on our human flesh in the person of the Son, Jesus Christ. He came to us not as a triumphant king, but rather as a fragile baby, born to a young woman. His first resting place was a manger, which is actually a trough that is traditionally used to hold food for farm animals. These humble beginnings were made possible by the humility of that same young woman, Mary, who through her trust in God was able to say "Yes!" to God's invitation to bring forth the Son of God into the world.

Today, in the midst of the Christmas Season, a mere week after we celebrated Christmas Day, we honor the woman who was instrumental in making this all come to fruition. The Gospel passage chosen for this day begins with the visit of the shepherds to the newborn savior.

► What do you know about shepherds?

► Why does this passage begin, "The shepherds went in haste . . . "?

Shepherds had an important responsibility in their work of taking care of sheep, but for the most part, they were considered to be on one of the lower rungs of socioeconomic status in society during those times. They were relatively poor people who often cared for animals that were not even their own. And yet, they cared immensely for those very animals. They were the ones to whom the angels

came to first with a grand "Glory to God in the highest" and good tidings of immense joy with the announcement of the birth of Jesus. And so, the shepherds had to rush to see this newborn savior for themselves, and they become the first people to come to pay homage to the newborn baby lying in a stall reserved for livestock.

► What was the effect of the shepherds visit to see baby Jesus?

In their humility, the shepherds were able to look past other concerns and distractions in their world to truly see the amazing reality that they witnessed. Having seen the newborn Messiah, they went forth to testify to what they had seen. And those who heard their testimony shared the Good News in turn with others. And how did Mary, the young mother who had recently given birth to the Son of God, respond to all of this attention? She responded with humility and grace, "[keeping] all these things, reflecting on them in her heart."

► Why do you think that this text says that Mary reflected upon these things in her heart?

► Why did the Gospel writer not write that it was her head or her brain in which she reflected upon this experience?

It is in her heart that Mary takes the reality of her role in the salvation of the world and reflects upon it. It was through the opening of her heart that she was able to humbly and confidently say yes to God's invitation in her life. Through contemplating upon God's love for her within her heart, she was able to raise her son to be able to go forth to accomplish his mission in the world.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 106.

Jesus was made known for all people not just the rich and the powerful, but the poor and lowly as evidenced in the shepherds' role as first witnesses to his birth.

It is in her Immaculate Heart that Mary reflected upon the world-changing mystery and reality of her Son's birth.

Act on the Word

Prayers of and through Mary

You will need copies of both the Magnificat, which comes to us from the Gospel of Luke, and the Memorare to hand out to each of the young people for this activity. The text of both prayers is below.

Pass out copies of both the Magnificat (a song of praise prayed by Mary) and the Memorare (a prayer addressed to Mary, asking for her intercession on our behalf) to all of the teens who are gathered. Pray each of the prayers with them:

Magnificat

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on his humble servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed, the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children for ever. Amen.

Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Invite the young people to reflect upon both of these prayers, silently in their hearts. After giving them adequate time to do so, encourage them to share, as they feel comfortable, any of their thoughts on the following questions: What words or phrases stand out for them? What parts of the prayers do they have lingering questions that they wish to explore deeper? Invite the young people to take these prayers with them and to integrate them into their regular practice of prayer.

Closing Prayer

*Lord Jesus Christ,
Prince of Peace,
hear our prayers on this day of new beginnings.
With Mary's intercession help us;
may we keep our resolution to grow in faith, to live
in hope, to be active in love, and to bring
greater peace to the world.
You live and reign for ever and ever.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.