

# Read

Numbers 6:22-27

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

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:16-21

# Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

January 1, 2023



## REFLECTION

The days leading up to Christmas are a rush of preparations, decoration, Christmas music, and gift wrapping. When it comes, Christmas often seems to pass by in a fog of colors and cheerful noise that continue as we ring in the New Year. The liturgies around Christmas echo the prayers of the shepherds in today's Gospel. Having followed God's instructions and received the Good News, they are filled with gratitude and are moved to worship and glorify God.

But when the celebrations are over, what comes next? Once the angels stopped singing and the shepherds and Magi left, Mary and Joseph must have been like any first-time parents: tired, a bit worried, and more than a bit overwhelmed. Luke tells us that Mary listened and kept everything she heard in her heart to think about and reflect on. If the shepherds are examples of praise, Mary is our model for contemplative prayer. Alongside Mary, we can also take all of our worry, excitement, confusion, hopes, and fears to God in prayer, with confidence that God will make all things clear in time.

## QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ The shepherds respond to God's message with praise while Mary responds with contemplation. Which is easier/harder for you? Why?
- ❖ How do you react to the quiet after a big holiday or celebration?



## ACTION

As you face the lull of January, the quiet time before the year winds itself up to the next source of excitement, open your heart to God's guidance for the coming year. Take some time in prayer to reflect on the events of the past year, the good and the bad. What did you accomplish? What do you regret? Ask Mary to help bring your doubts, worries, hopes, and fears to God over the coming year.

Fr. Josh Johnson teaches us  
about the prayer practice  
of lectio divina: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKYE0c3ik9k>





January 1, 2023

# SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

## LECTIONARY #18ABC

Numbers 6:22-27

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

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

Exactly one week after celebrating the birth of Christ, this solemnity celebrates the motherhood of Mary. Today's Gospel continues the same passage from Luke which we might have heard at one of the Christmas Masses. In celebrating the mystery of the incarnation, we focused on the good news which the angels proclaimed to the shepherds. As today's Gospel continues that story, the shepherds find the Holy Family and tell of their encounter with the angels. Today we take a deeper look at Mary as the Mother of God, whose yes brought the savior into the world. While Mary does not speak in today's Gospel passage, her actions and attitudes provide us with a tremendous starting point for the New Year: in silence, may we keep reflecting on and pondering the Word of God in our hearts.

**Q FOCUS:** Keep reflecting on God, pondering in your heart.

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

During the liturgical season of Christmas Time, we focus on the events surrounding the birth and family of Jesus. Since Christmas and this solemnity of Mary both fall on Sundays this year, the feast of the Holy Family, which is normally celebrated on the Sunday

between these two holydays of obligation, was celebrated on Friday, December 30. This week, we honor St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory Nazianzen (January 2), St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (January 4), and St. John Neumann (January 5); four saints who each contributed to the Church's theology and education. Basil and Gregory were scholars whose writings had such a profound impact on how and what we teach that they are considered Doctors of the Church. Mother Seton helped found a Catholic school in the US, the first free one. John Neumann was the first to establish a diocesan school system in the United States.

### Church Teaching Connection

"Mary kept *all these things*, pondering them in her heart. What were *these things*? They were joys and sorrows. On the one hand, the birth of Jesus, the love of Joseph, the visit of the shepherds, that radiant night. But on the other, an uncertain future, homelessness . . . the disappointment of having to give birth to Jesus in a stable. Hopes and worries, light and darkness: *all these things* dwelt in the heart of Mary. What did she do? She *pondered* them, that is to say she dwelt on them, with God, in her heart" (Pope Francis, Homily, January 1, 2018).

## 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:*

Today's Gospel continues the passage we heard on Christmas. After encountering the glory of God in the angels, the shepherds excitedly rush to see for themselves.

► Think about viral videos, GIFs, or pics you've seen recently—the ones everyone has to see because it's so amazing. What draws people to see for themselves? When have you found the need to see for yourself?

The shepherds were so genuinely amazed that they couldn't stop talking about it. Yet interestingly, in the entire account of the birth of Jesus, Mary does not speak. In her silence, we're assured that "Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Imagine Mary taking it all in—from the angel's announcement about Jesus' conception to her visit with Elizabeth to her journey to Bethlehem to the birth of the Son of God to the shepherds encountering the angels who proclaimed the birth of the messiah, joyously praising the glory of God. Mary is the Mother of God. That's a lot to take in.

► If you had personally witnessed this event, what "things" would you reflect upon or ponder?

► At this point in the story, what might Mary be reflecting upon or pondering?

When we have a profound experience, especially one of great joy, our first instinct is to capture the moment with our phones, post it, and effectively tell the world through our favorite form of social media. As the saying goes, "Pictures, or it didn't happen." Lacking technology, the shepherds go off glorifying and praising God. Mary, on the other hand, stays silent, reflecting and pondering. This is the person who effectively held God within her. Perhaps she knew that silent reflection on what God had done and continues to do is the surest way to keep holding God within her. As the Mother of God, Mary not only brings Jesus to us, but in her actions, she models to us how to hold God within our own hearts and keep God on our minds: silently reflecting and pondering what God has done and continues to do, in silence.

► What are some profound experiences of joy that you treasure in your own heart?

In contemporary culture, silence is difficult. There are always plenty of distractions, whether it's things to do, places to be, things to watch, or just fiddling with our phones. Yet it's in those moments of silent reflection that we can share all the things in our heart with God in prayer.

► What would be needed for you to carve out some time each day for silent reflection in your daily life?

## 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 98.

In the entire account of Jesus’ nativity, Mary does not speak.

Mary keeps, reflects on, and ponders all that God does.

Mary models how to keep God in our hearts through silent reflection.

## Act on the Word

### Resolving with Mary

For this activity, you will need journals and writing materials. Ideally, this activity should occur in silence, so depending on your space, you may want to take the young people into the chapel or sanctuary. You may want to provide the teens with a written copy of the reflection question and suggestions if you are not in a space where they can be displayed.

Around New Year’s, it is customary for people to articulate resolutions, most of which involve a change in behavior or attitude. These resolutions often shed light on our priorities and inner desires, as if to say “What do you want for yourself in the New Year?”

The Church begins the new calendar year with this solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, orienting us toward Mary who brings God to us and us to God. Pondering in silent reflection, like Mary, take this time to make your own resolutions to help you to orient yourself more toward God. Reflect on the past, ponder the future, and ask yourself, “What would Mary, the Mother of God—who brings God to us and us to God—suggest to bring me closer to God?”

Invite the teens to simply ponder that question: “What would Mary, the Mother of God—who brings God to us and us to God—suggest to bring me closer to God?” Consider resolving to do the following:

- ✦ Develop a specific virtue, such as faith, hope, love, wisdom, justice, temperance (self-control), or courage.
- ✦ Clarify for yourself: how and why will this virtue help?
- ✦ Determine specific concrete actions that reflect practicing this virtue, and those which will further cultivate this virtue.
- ✦ Commit to the follow-through on these actions, especially if it means scheduling time in your day or week.

Give the teens at least fifteen minutes in silent reflection; more if time allows. If time allows, regroup in a location conducive to discussion. Invite the young people to share the virtue they would like to cultivate and the actions they plan to take. Encourage the teens to support one another and offer additional practical ideas to cultivate virtue. Conclude by praying for them and inviting them to pray for one another.

### Closing Prayer

God,  
who in your kindness  
has bestowed on us the honor of Mary as  
our mother,  
grant to us the grace  
to live in the simplicity  
of her obedience and the purity of  
her heart.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
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](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.