

## 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, 2026



## REFLECTION

“Wait, is Mary older than God?”

My five-year-old sprang this question on me at bedtime. Even though I have a lot of theological education, I wasn't sure at first how to answer. Of course, Mary isn't older than God, but my son had a point: Whenever we meet someone's mother, they're older than their child. So how could Mary be the mother of *God*?

The teaching that Mary is the mother of God, not just the mother of the “human Jesus,” is one that the early Church struggled to discern. But they finally concluded that Mary *has to be* the mother of *the whole Jesus*, or else it would be like breaking Jesus into two parts, denying who Jesus is.

The Church teaches that Jesus was fully human and fully divine. The Son has always existed, along with the Father and Holy Spirit. That's the nature of God. But in the incarnation, God, in the Person of the Son, embraces humanity. And, well, humans have moms.

Mary pondered a lot of things in her heart. Perhaps this is one of the things she pondered: How can I, a simple human being, possibly bring the God of the universe into the world he created?



## ACTION

Mary *did* know quite a lot about Jesus, because Gabriel (Lk 1:26-38), Elizabeth (1:39-45), and Simeon and Anna (Lk 2:22-38) told her. Nevertheless, the popular song “Mary, Did You Know?” is probably a good list of the sorts of things Mary pondered in her heart. This week, spend time pondering with Mary: How can I help to bring Jesus into the world? How wonderful it is to know that I am part of God's glorious story too!



“Mary, Did You Know?”

—The Hound + The Fox

[https://youtu.be/kzQO4L\\_OKQA](https://youtu.be/kzQO4L_OKQA)



## QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Am I willing to say yes to carrying Jesus with me, as Mary did?
- ❖ Am I willing to say yes to sharing Jesus with the world, as Mary did?



January 1, 2026

# SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

## LECTIONARY #18ABC

Numbers 6:22-27

Psalm 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

Today's Gospel presents two contrasting but complementary responses to hearing the Good News. On the one hand, we see the way the shepherds worship and praise God. They share the Good News with joy. In contrast, Mary responds by reflecting on the message in her heart. Her inclination to ponder this moment while the shepherds go out rejoicing and praising shows us that faith and prayer can take on many forms and there is room for all of them: we are to share the Good News with others but also contemplate the messages we receive from God in our own hearts. Mary is a model of prayer for us and continually points us toward her son, Jesus.

**Q FOCUS:** *The shepherds and Mary show us different ways to respond to the Good News.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

Today, on this first day of the calendar year, the Church honors Mary as the Mother of God. She is a model of prayer for us and directs us to a deeper relationship with her son Jesus Christ. On January 2, the Church honors St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory Nazianzen. These two saints were friends and contributed greatly to the early Church through their theological writings and their defense of the faith. They are Doctors of the Church. On January 3, the

Church honors the Most Holy Name of Jesus. Jesus' name means "God saves"—Jesus' very purpose.

### Church Teaching Connection

"The Virgin Mary, who at the message of the angel received the Word of God in her heart and in her body and brought forth life to the world, is acknowledged and honored as truly the mother of God and of the Redeemer. Redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son and united to him by a close and indissoluble tie, she is endowed with the high office and dignity of being the mother of the Son of God, and therefore she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the holy Spirit" (*Lumen gentium*, 53).

## 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:*

When we think about the Christmas story, we often call to mind the nativity scene: Mary, Joseph, Jesus, an angel, shepherds, animals, and wise men. In today's reading, Luke highlights the shepherds and Mary. Because shepherds were among the poorest of society, Luke uses this event to illustrate how Jesus was sent to save everyone, not just those who were well off or in good social standing. The angel appeared to the shepherds and announced the Good News of Christ's incarnation and told the shepherds how to find him. Trusting the heavenly message, the shepherds went to worship and to share the angel's message.

Another standout character in today's Gospel is Mary, whose response to the message the shepherds bring is one of reflection. Though Mary's reaction is different from the reaction of the shepherds, all of them were worshipping God in their own way.

► **Which character do you most identify with in today's Gospel, the shepherds or Mary? Why do you feel connected to that character?**

When we go to God in prayer, there are many postures that we can take and many ways to pray. We might have been taught to use the acronym ACTS when praying: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication (asking God for things). Sometimes it is challenging to balance these different aspects of prayer—we might easily fall into just asking God for

things, while forgetting about offering our praise and thanksgiving and confessing our failings. In today's Gospel, the shepherds provide an example of adoring and thanking God. Mary adores as well but expresses it in a very different way.

► **What does your prayer time look like? When and where do you pray?**

► **What types of postures and prayer styles do you typically adopt? Does your location and topic of prayer influence how you pray?**

► **Is there a type of prayer you would like to do more of?**

Mary is a model of prayer for us because of her unique role in salvation history. The Church gives Mary the title Mother of God. God set her apart by keeping her free from original sin so that she could say yes to the angel's announcement of Jesus' birth and God's plan to fulfill salvation in that way. When we say that Mary is the Mother of God, we are actually making a statement of our belief in who Jesus is: he is God incarnate—fully human and fully divine—the second Person of the Trinity. As the woman chosen to bear Jesus, Mary is rightfully called the Mother of God.

Throughout the Gospels, we see how Mary models the life of prayer that all Christian believers should aspire to. As in today's Gospel, she reflects on things in her heart. She completely trusts God in all matters, big and small. For example, she trusted that Jesus would turn water into wine to save a couple embarrassment on their wedding day (Jn 2:1–11). We can also ask Mary to pray for us; just as we would ask a fellow Christian to pray for us, we can ask Mary to pray on our behalf. Because of her unique relationship with God, we know that these prayers will be brought before him.

► **How does honoring Mary as the Mother of God on January 1 prepare us for the New Year?**

When we think about the New Year, we often think about making resolutions. Our top resolution every year should be to grow in our relationship with Christ. Learning more about Mary and honoring her role as the Mother of God can help us do this because Mary is always pointing us toward her Son.

She is a model of discipleship and can help us along our own journey to God.

## 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.*

**God's message of salvation is for all people.**

**There are different ways to pray.**

**Mary can help us begin the New Year with prayer and inspiration.**

## Act on the Word

### Wonders of the Heart

*For this activity, you will need construction paper, pens, magazines and newspapers, scissors, and glue. Additionally, ensure that you will have access to the church, chapel, or other prayer space—if none are available, bring in a cross or crucifix to create a prayer space in the place you gather.*

In today's Gospel, Mary ponders in her heart what she has witnessed at Christ's nativity. Share with the teens that it is important for us to spend some of our prayer time in reflection, so that we can better hear what God is saying to us.

Distribute the activity materials to the young people. Have each person draw a large heart on his or her paper and cut it out. Then, invite the teens to look through the magazines and newspapers for articles or images that make them curious about God's creation and his presence in the world. These images, words, and articles can be positive things that inspire them,

or they could be items that make them ponder or wonder. When they find things that catch their attention, they should cut them out. Have the teens assemble their items into a collage on their hearts.

Once everyone has completed their heart collages, give them time to share some of things that they found with a partner or with the large group. After this time of sharing, move into the church or some other prayer space that is available to you. If none are available, set up a cross or crucifix in your room. Have the teens settle in for a time of prayerful reflection. As this time concludes, invite them to place their hearts in front of the cross. Conclude the activity by having everyone recite the Hail Mary.

### Closing Prayer

*Almighty and ever-living God,  
in Mary, you show us your love for all  
humanity and provide us a model of  
selfless love and fidelity.  
Instill within us a mother's love for all  
your people,  
so that in faith, we may honor you and  
reveal your divine friendship to all.  
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.*