

# 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, 2021



## REFLECTION

Luke's Gospel narrative consistently shows that the ways of God challenge our human expectations: the lowly are exalted, the hungry receive abundant food, and the poor experience wealth. It makes perfect sense, then, that shepherds are among the first people to hear about the birth of Jesus. In Jesus' time, shepherds were some of the poorest people in society. Shepherds were hired workers and did not own land or property. Although seemingly lowly by human standards, Luke emphasizes that God's salvific promise is for all people. Who better than shepherds to hear and share the message of the birth of Christ?



## ACTION

What are your resolutions for the New Year? More specifically, what are some of your hopes and goals for your faith life? Use today's Gospel as inspiration! How can you help bring about the Kingdom of God by creating a more loving, just, and peaceful world for all people? How can you follow the example of Jesus and serve others, especially people who society might relegate to the margins? Share your resolutions, hopes and goals with your family and friends so you can help hold each other accountable.



Look up Pope Francis' message for the New Year on the Vatican's website:  
<http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html>



## QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Where do you find hope as you begin this New Year?
- ❖ How does today's Gospel challenge your own perceptions and opinions about hearing and responding to the Word of God?



January 1, 2021

# 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

Mary is faithful in her response to all that God wills for her life. She lives her life with complete trust in God's Word. As a mother, she loves and protects her child, but also entrusts him to God. As our heavenly mother, Mary cares for all of us and directs us toward the Son. She inspires all of us, whether we are mothers or not, to be a people who care for needs of others and place our trust in God.

**Q FOCUS:** *Mary cares for all of humanity as a mother cares for her child.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

On January 2, we celebrate the memorial of St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory Nazianzen. They are both Doctors of the Church and were contemporaries of one another. They were great theologians and bishops. They fought against many heresies (false teachings) and helped to spread Good News through their theological writings.

### Church Teaching Connection

"Here there opens up a broad prospect, within which the Blessed Virgin Mary continues to 'go before' the People of God. Her exceptional pilgrimage of faith represents a constant point of reference for the Church, for individuals and for communities, for peoples and nations and, in a sense, for all humanity. It is indeed difficult to encompass and measure its range" (*Redemptoris mater*, 6).

## 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:*

Though we do not know that much about Mary's life, we see her throughout the Gospel as a companion to Jesus in his ministry. The four evangelists illustrate different parts of her life and show us that she was with him until the very end. In this passage we hear today, Mary is there as a witness to Jesus' ministry and God's work in the world, even before Jesus himself can minister to others. By his very presence, the infant Jesus is a witness of God's love.

► **What do you know about Mary? What does this tell you about Mary's role in Jesus' ministry?**

Mary has a gracious spirit and accepts where God leads her. She has a deep and abiding faith. She said "yes" to bearing the savior of the world as an unmarried woman, which demonstrates her complete faith in

God. In today's Gospel passage, we hear how she prayerfully reflected on all that God was doing in her life. Whatever was to come, she placed her trust in God and allowed him to guide her throughout her life.

► **Do you place your trust in God, even when the future is uncertain? How do you rely on God when you are confused or unsure of what to do next?**

As a mother, Mary certainly felt the aches and pains of childbirth as well as the heartache of wanting to protect her child from the cruelty of the world, but not being able to. Her prayerful devotion to God must have grounded her in her parenting and in the knowledge that her child was really of God and for God.

Even for those of us who are not parents, it is hard not to worry about someone we love. We watch out for our siblings, we want to make sure that our parents and grandparents are all right, and we might help take care of our friends when they are sick. We have to trust that God will take care of them, just as he takes care of us. Mary gives us an example of how to love another person while still entrusting them to God. We should help them as we can, but also allow them to follow God's will for their life.

► **How can Mary inspire you this week? What gifts did she share with our world that can help you better serve others?**

## 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 102.

**Just as Mary was a companion to Jesus, she also walks with us and leads us to her son.**

**We entrust our loved ones to God's care.**

**Mary is a model of faithful discipleship.**

## Act on the Word

### Making Time for Prayer

You will need copies of several Marian prayers. Some of these might include the Hail Mary, the Hail, Holy Queen, the Memorare, the Angelus, the Regina Caeli, or prayers of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Our Lady of Guadalupe, or Our Lady of Lourdes. You can also include Marian prayers that are particular to your parish community or culture.

As we know from today's Gospel passage, Mary was a woman with a prayerful spirit. Her ability to face the unknowns in life was a result of her close relationship with God. We foster this type of relationship with God by communicating with him in prayer and listening for his response in our hearts. Today, we will be spending time in prayerful reflection with some Marian prayers. Be sure to explain to the young people that we do not pray *to* Mary as if she were a divine being. Rather, our Marian prayers ask for Mary's intercession on our behalf to her Son,

Jesus. We ask Mary to pray for us because she is in the presence of God and her motherly care extends to all of humanity. She desires our salvation and leads us to her Son, through whom we find our eternal hope. Marian prayers also help to point us toward Christ and recall aspects of his life, death, and Resurrection.

Invite the young people to choose one of the prayers and to find a comfortable prayer space in the room. They will be spending several minutes in silent reflection with the prayer of their choice. Invite them to reflect on Mary's motherhood and how it relates to Jesus' life and ministry. Then consider how it relates to their life and what the prayer they chose reveals about God's presence in their life.

### Closing Prayer

*Heavenly Father,  
you gave us Mary as a mother who loves  
and guides us.*

*Help us always to look to her as our model  
of the perfect disciple.*

*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.*