

Sunday, January 1, 2017

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Numbers 6:22-27

2nd Reading: Galatians 4:4-7

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

Gospel: Luke 2:16-21

Joining Mary in Pondering and Praising the Lord

Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. (Luke 2:19)

On this New Year's Day, you might say, "I'm looking forward to watching all the football games and parades on TV today." Or you might say, "This is a great day to look back over all the blessings of the past year."

The Church celebrates New Year's Day in a special way too by honoring Mary as the Mother of God. But Mary isn't just the Mother of God; she is our mother as well. And as the Catechism teaches us, because Mary is our mother, she is also our "Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix" (CCC 969).

So how does Mary fulfill all these roles? Let's look at two key ways.

First, we know that Mary pondered and treasured everything that came from God. As today's Gospel says, she dwelt on what the shepherds told her. She also pondered and treasured Gabriel's visit at the annunciation. She pondered and treasured how the Magi were led to the manger by God's star. She pondered and treasured what the young Jesus said when they found that he had stayed behind to teach the elders in the Temple.

Right now, try to see how Mary is asking you to take time to ponder who Jesus is and what he has done for you. Imagine Mary asking you to treasure him above everything else.

Second, take a look at Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55). This prayer shows how much Mary loved to praise and glorify God.

Right now, try to see how Mary is asking you to join her in praising God with all your heart. Imagine her inviting you to dedicate the first affections of your heart to Jesus by rejoicing in him, singing to him, and worshipping him.

Mary is not only your mother; she is your prayer partner as well. So join her today, and pray your own Magnificat.

"Jesus, let my soul magnify you! Let my spirit rejoice in your salvation!"

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. In the first reading, Aaron and his sons are instructed through Moses to bless the Israelites with this prayer: “The LORD bless you and keep you! The LORD let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The LORD look upon you kindly and give you peace!”
 - Do you ever pray similar blessings for your family and friends? If you don’t already, would you be willing to do it once a week during 2017?
 - If you have children at home try using this prayer from the first reading to pray over them in the evening, before bed, or in the morning. What do you think the results will be?
2. In the responsorial psalm, we also ask the Lord to “bless us” and “let his face shine upon us.” We ask him to permit us to praise him: “May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.”
 - As you reflect on the last year, what has the Lord done that you can thank and praise him for?
3. In the second reading, St. Paul tells the Galatians and us that we are “are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then also an heir, through God.” That is why we can cry out, “Abba, Father” (Abba means daddy in Aramaic.)
 - What does it mean to you to know that through faith in Jesus Christ, you are an adopted son (or daughter) and heir of your Heavenly Father?
 - As a son or daughter, and heir, what qualities or attributes of your Heavenly Father do you want most for your life? What steps are you willing to take to receive them?
4. The Gospel reading tells us that the shepherds came to the manger in Bethlehem and “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.” Here is Mary’s response to the shepherd’s message: “Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.”
 - During this season of New Year’s resolutions, is it possible that God is inviting you to take on Mary’s approach by setting aside time each day to quiet your heart and reflect on who he is and what he has done?
 - As you take up this practice, what part can it play in giving you a new perspective on your life?
5. The meditation describes two lessons we can learn from Mary’s response to be the “Mother of God” and how we can apply them to our own lives: 1) “try to see how Mary is asking you to take time to ponder who Jesus is and what he has done for you. Imagine Mary asking you to treasure him above everything else” and 2) “try to see how Mary is asking you to join her in praising God with all your heart. Imagine her inviting you to dedicate the first affections of your heart to Jesus by rejoicing in him, singing to him, and worshipping him”.
 - As you begin the New Year, are you willing to commit to a daily time of prayer to “dedicate the first affections of your heart to Jesus by rejoicing in him, singing to him, and worshipping him”? Why or Why not?
 - If you already have a daily prayer time, how can you structure your prayer time in order to spend a little less time presenting your list of needs to God, or trying to move his will, and more time to “ponder who Jesus is and what he has done for you”?
6. Take some time now to pray that this new year would be a special time of grace for you and all your loved ones, and be a time to worship and adore the Lord in a deeper way for the salvation he has won for you through his birth, death, and resurrection. Use the words below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

“Jesus, let my soul magnify you! Let my spirit rejoice in your salvation!”

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is in partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also a member of the **National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal** (<http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org/>) and a member of the board of

As posted on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal National Service Committee’s website: www.nsc-chariscenter.org

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