

Alleluia, alleluia!

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; now he speaks to us through his Son. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Lk 2: 16-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

The shepherds found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the crib . . . When the eighth day came, they gave him the name of Jesus.

The shepherds hurried away to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds had to say. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; it was exactly as they had been told.

When the eighth day came and the child was to be circumcised, they gave him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before his conception.

■ The Gospel of the Lord.



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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD / A

1 JANUARY 2023

MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

The Octave of Christmas concludes by honouring Mary as the Mother of God continuing the long and rich tradition that goes back to the Council of Ephesus in 431. The formula that Levites and priests were instructed to use when blessing the people of Israel has a special resonance when applied to Mary. She could surely say that she had been blessed in the gift of Jesus, that God's face had shone upon her, and that God had been gracious to her in ways that she could never have anticipated or imagined. Her positive response to the words of the angel Gabriel opened a pathway for all humanity.

In the letter to the Galatians, we get a glimpse into Paul's wonder at the mysterious ways of God knowing that our ability to cry out in the Spirit 'Abba, Father' would not have come about if Jesus had not been born of Mary. He describes this birth as taking place in the fullness of God's time. Jesus was born as a member of the people of Israel, but this is only a part of his identity and role in God's saving plan that extends to all creation.

The first witnesses to the birth of Jesus in Luke's Gospel were the shepherds who were informed that a Saviour had been born in Bethlehem, the city of David whose own career as king started humbly as a shepherd. In a similar way, Jesus' humble beginnings in a manger will lead to blessings for all of us. Like Mary, we are called to treasure all this in our hearts.

FIRST READING

Num 6: 22-27

A reading from the book of Numbers.

They will call down my name on the children of Israel and I will bless them.

The Lord spoke to Moses and said, 'Say this to Aaron and his sons: "This is how you are to bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them:

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord let his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

May the Lord uncover his face and bring you peace."

This is how they are to call down my name on the sons of Israel, and I will bless them.'

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 66: 2-3, 5, 6, 8. R. v. 2

R. May God bless us in his mercy.

1. God, be gracious and bless us and let your face shed its light upon us. So will your ways be known upon earth and all nations learn your saving help. R.

2. Let the nations be glad and exult for you rule the world with justice. With fairness you rule the peoples, you guide the nations on earth. R.

3. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you. May God still give us his blessing till the ends of the earth revere him. R.

SECOND READING

Gal 4: 4-7

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Galatians.

When the appointed time came, God sent his son, born of a woman.

When the appointed time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law and to enable us to be adopted as sons. The proof that you are sons is that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts: the Spirit that cries, 'Abba, Father', and it is this that makes you a son, you are not a slave anymore; and if God has made you son, then he has made you heir.

■ The word of the Lord.

