

1 January – Mary, Mother of God A – B – C

First Reading *Numbers 6:22-27*

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 to you and bring you peace.'

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

Second Reading *Galatians 4:4-7*

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 any more; and if God has made you son, then he has made you heir.

Gospel *Luke 2:16-21*

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.

Meditation

This is the octave of Christmas, a designation less popular than in centuries past, but still useful.

Carrying a celebration through the eighth day allows for more celebrations, more aspects of the mystery to be opened in our midst. The mystery of God in human flesh and history is ritually remembered through these several weeks from Christmas day to the Baptism of the Lord. On this octave day a very specific aspect of this mystery holds our attention: Mary is the Mother of God. Contemporary Catholics can recall a number of names for this day, titles dictated by Church tradition, society, and various popes.

It is New Year's Day; it is often still called the circumcision of Jesus; it has been decreed as World Day of Peace. Research showed that it is the oldest feast of Mary in our Church. Amidst the echoes of Christmas and the visit of the shepherds, we take time to celebrate Mary. The primacy of the celebration of Mary as the Mother of God indicates the primacy of this title. Throughout the liturgical year, we will remember her life, celebrating the Immaculate Conception, the Birth of Mary, the Visitation, the Assumption.

We will revere her as Queen, Our Lady of Sorrows, and Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

We recall her in the eucharistic prayers and at night prayer. We start now with her most profound and basic title, Mary, Mother of God: "God sent forth his Son born of a woman."