

## The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

### TODAY\*

**Numbers 6:22–27**  
**Galatians 4:4–7**  
**Luke 2:16–21**

### MONDAY

**John 1:19–28**

*"Among you stands one whom you do not know . . ."*

### TUESDAY

**John 1:29–34**

*" . . . I myself have . . . testified that this is the Son of God."*

### WEDNESDAY

**John 1:35–42**

*"Look, here is the Lamb of God!"*

### THURSDAY

**John 1:43–51**

*"You are the King of Israel!"*

### FRIDAY

**Luke 3:23–38**

*"Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his work."*

### SATURDAY

**John 2:1–11**

*"My hour has not yet come."*

\*Solemnity of the Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord and the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

## Mary, Mother of God and Our Mother



Today is the first day of the calendar year, a day when people often make new resolutions or prophecies that attempt to predict the future; we could even say it's a day of cosmic proportions.

In the meantime, the Catholic Church celebrates the motherhood of Mary to replace the celebration of the circumcision of the child Jesus in the liturgical calendar. While the circumcision emphasized the humanity of Jesus and his incorporation in the Jewish covenant, the celebration of Mary as Mother of God reminds us that the child was not only a human baby visited by shepherds, but also God's eternal Word made flesh in a total union with humanity.

The visit of the shepherds also points to the importance of Mary. She is mentioned as the first one the shepherds notice and as the one holding everything in her heart in a special way. Moreover, Jesus gave Mary to us at the foot of the cross, thus the celebration of his birth has to include his mother.

Mary is called Mother of God because she is the mother of the God-man. Earlier controversy claimed she was mother only of the human Jesus. The controversy came to an end in 431 when the ecumenical Council of Ephesus decreed that since the baby was also God, Mary could rightly be called Mother of God.

God invited Mary to a unique and amazing cooperation in the work of Creation: to give her body to the miraculous and awesome birth of God in the flesh. Ave Maria!



## The Faith of the Church

On January 1st, the Church used to celebrate Jesus' circumcision, the sign of his incorporation into the people of the covenant. Instead, today we celebrate the motherhood of Mary, as Mother of God. Mary conceived Christ by the Holy Spirit who, through the angel, proclaimed him the Christ at his birth. Also, through Mary, the Holy Spirit brings people, the objects of God's merciful love, into communion with Christ (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 695, 725, 2599).



## Questions of the Week

Catholics believe that Mary is the Mother of the man Jesus, the Mother of God, and our mother. She is also the Mother of the Church and the humble woman who said a big YES to God's request to be the earthen vessel for Jesus.

### Adults

*What does the mystery of this human baby, who is also the Word made flesh, the Lord of all creation say to me about the love of God for us all?*

### Children

*What can I do this year to be more like God in loving everyone, even those I don't like very much?*

## Responding to God's Word . . .

In most cultures, the evening of the first day of each new year is celebrated somewhat lavishly. These festivities often are filled with symbols, traditions, special music, and food.

We tend to review our decisions and behaviors of the past year and take this time to define new goals and resolutions for the coming year. It feels as if we have been given another chance, a new opportunity to start from scratch. However, the spiritual meaning is actually more powerful and goes much deeper.

It is against this backdrop of starting over that the Church places the liturgical celebration of Mary as the

Mother of God. The feast of this solemnity acknowledges that Mary is the Mother of God, because she is the mother of the God-man; this we call the mystery of the Incarnation.

As Catholics, all we are asked to do is embrace this mystery of the Word made flesh and to cooperate with God's plans for us. Mary showed us how to do this by lending her body to the miraculous conception and birth of God in the flesh.

As we begin a new year, our most important resolution ought to be to cooperate more deeply with our God of love.

## SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

**In the home.** Take some time during Advent or Christmas to gather together as a family. Let every member explain briefly what the celebration of Mary, Mother of God means to them.

**In the workplace or in school.** Take holy cards with a brief explanation of the feast and give one to anyone who is open to receive it.

**In the community.** Try to organize a seminar in your Parish to dialogue on the importance of this solemnity.



## Meditation Moment

The novel *The Unoriginal Sinner and the Ice Cream God* contains a letter from young Conroy to God. It reads: "Dear God, Today . . . a guest lecturer proved through the use of logic that you don't exist." God responded to the letter as follows: "Conroy, Ask your professor . . . to list the reasons why pizza and beer taste good together. . . . Logic and reality don't have much to do with one another." The point of God's response is this: Some things are beyond reason. All we can do is what Mary did in today's reading [Luke 2:19]: ponder them deeply.

## For reflection . . .

What do I find "wonderful" about the fact that God took human form and lived among us?

WE DIE ON THE DAY WHEN OUR LIVES CEASE TO BE ILLUMINED BY THE STEADY RADIANCE, RENEWED DAILY, OF A WONDER, THE SOURCE OF WHICH IS BEYOND REASON.

DAG HAMMARSKJOLD

FROM *MISSION* BY MARK LINK, SJ

## Let Nothing Trouble You

Let nothing trouble you.

Let nothing scare you.

All is fleeting.

God alone is unchanging.  
Patience everything obtains.

Who possesses God  
nothing wants.

God alone suffices.

From *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila* Volume Three, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez © 1985

Carry this thought in your heart as a guide for your faith journey this week.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman . . . in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. Galatians 4:4-5

## Profile in Faith

**Saint Angela Merici**  
(1470?–1540)

As a young woman Angela became a member of the Secular Franciscan Order. The ignorance of the poor children in her neighborhood saddened her, and she organized a group of girls to help her in catechetical work. Later, she formed the Company of St. Ursula to offer Christian education to future wives and mothers.

Feast Day: January 27

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