

The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Luke 2:16-21

16 The shepherds hurried away to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. 17 When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him, 18 and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds had to say. 19 As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; it was exactly as they had been told.

21 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.

Other readings: Numbers 6:22-27 Psalm 66 (67) Galatians 4:4-7

Most of this gospel reading for the feast of Mary, Mother of God, the octave day of Christmas and the first day of the calendar year, has already been heard as the gospel for the Dawn Mass of Christmas Day. The final verse is added today. It is particularly appropriate, since this is the eighth day, the octave day, of Christmas.

But there is a more important reason why reading these verses today, one week after Christmas Day, is different. We are asked to focus on the role and on the behavior of Mary, the mother of the Messiah. This feast on the octave day of Christmas was instituted in the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council. It replaces the feast of the Circumcision of our Lord. It is most appropriate that we should focus on Mary on this day.

The coming into a human life of the Son of God could only happen with the collaboration of this humble woman of Nazareth. God respects our human freedom. Mary was invited to work for God in this unique way. Her response to the invitation was a courageous and generous 'yes'. Her *fiat* is a turning point in history for it enables the Son of God to become a human being. Her *fiat* is an example to all those who, like Mary, endeavor to do the will of God by following Jesus.

On this solemn feast we continue to commemorate the birth of Jesus. We acknowledge the consequences of this birth for us, as St Paul writes in the reading from the Letter to the Galatians: 'at the appointed time God sent his Son, born of a woman' in order to redeem us and offer us adoption as children of God. Our first reading, from the Book of Numbers, invokes God's blessing on God's people as the new year begins.

Do I appreciate the courage and love of Mary and see her as an example?

Do I imitate Mary's silence and her pondering of God's goodness in her heart?

We pray that we may follow the example of Mary, the first servant of Jesus Christ, who listened for God's word and responded with generosity.

We open our hearts to God at the beginning of a new year, that God may bless us and keep us day by day.