

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD (C)
January 1, 2016

YEAR, UNDER THE LOVING GAZE OF MARY



I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Num 6:22-27)

The Lord said to Moses: / “Speak to Aaron and his sons and tell them: / This is how you shall **ble**ss the Israelites. / Say to them: / The Lord **ble**ss 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!** / So shall they invoke my name upon the Israelites, and I will **ble**ss them.”

THE FOCUS: **The Blessing of Peace and Grace**

COMMENTARY

This prayer belongs to the section on the prayer for ones who are dedicated to the Lord (Nazirites). Aaron invokes this blessings over the camp.

These vowed people may observe this dedication for just a period of time. During the time of Jesus this was common.

The Hebrew word for peace is Shalom. Its meaning includes the idea of happiness, good health, prosperity, friendship, and general well-being.

REFLECTIONS

As we begin this year, we are greeted with this prayer of blessing for the whole year round. A fullness of life!

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8)
MAY GOD BLESS US IN HIS MERCY.

SECOND READING (Gal 4:4-7)

Brothers and sisters: / When the fullness of time had come, God sent his **Son**, / **born of a woman**, born under the law, / to ransom those under the law, / so that **we might receive adoption as sons**. / As proof that you are **sons**, / God sent the Spirit of his **Son** into our hearts, / crying out, “Abba, Father!” / So you are no longer a slave but a **son**, / and if a **son then also an heir**, through God.

THE FOCUS: **Becoming God’s Children**

COMMENTARY

- This seems to be the only occasion that Paul mentions about the role of Mary in the history of salvation, even if he does not mention the name of Mary.

- The woman is born under the law or Torah which echoes the women of Abraham’s time Hagar and Sarah who have become prototypes of the kinds of people who received God. But God in the appropriate time chose to save us through Mary’s son by the obedience of Jesus. Mary therefore has a significant role not because of the Law but because even she herself made her *fiat* (Yes) to God’s plan.

- Mary is instrumental, then for the unfolding of the gifting of the Spirit of Christ. This Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit is the proof that we have become heirs of God.

• And the Spirit is found in each one's heart that we are able to address God, "Abba," Our Father.

REFLECTIONS

Mary can help us receive the Holy Spirit in our hearts as she has given us her Son. She continues to protect us and to intercede for us now and in the coming days.

GOSPEL READING (Lk 2:16-21)

The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, / and the infant lying in the manger. / When they saw this, / they 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. / **And Mary kept all these things, / reflecting on them in her heart.** / Then the shepherds returned, / glorifying and praising God / for all they had heard and seen, / just as it had been told to them. / When eight days were completed for his circumcision, / he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel / before he was conceived in the womb.

THE FOCUS: Mary's Reflection

COMMENTARY

• The glad tidings that God has found favor with humanity is kept in Mary's heart. She has just heard this message. She in fact names her son Jesus, Savior. And she lives out this message, as later, when her Son would die on the cross, she stands beside him. There is serenity and peace in her even in times of adversity and persecution.

REFLECTION

As the year ushers in, we pray for peace in our family, in our country and throughout the

world. Mary stands as light for us who long for peace throughout the year.

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TO DEVELOP YOUR SHARING/HOMILY

The First Reading talks about an act of blessing upon the special chosen people. The Second Reading however, through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, salvation is offered for all. And The Gospel highlights Mary's contemplation of God's saving acts through her Son. A profound joy!

How to develop your sharing/homily

Begin with the reasons for celebrating New Year. Our secular world offers so many reasons: additional age and wisdom, resolutions, etc. But add more the religious dimension of the reason for celebrating Mary's motherhood. How she has brought blessing to humanity (First Reading) and this blessing is not just to those who are observing vows, but to all who are justified in Jesus (Second Reading). That is why we have reasons for treasuring all these things like Mary who pondered all these blessings in her heart. The Holy Spirit dwells in our heart. The Holy Spirit will strengthen us as we follow Jesus' command: that we become agents of peace for others as Mary was, is and will always be.

III. OUR CONTEXT.

1. Can you now see why New Year's day, the day we honor Mary as Mother of God is declared World Day of Peace?
2. What are our new year's resolution for our country?

-prepared by Hansel B. Mapayo, SSP

