

Scripture Study

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God—Cycles ABC



Opening prayer

Numbers 6:22-27

(Ps 67:2-3,5-6,8)

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:16-21

Overview of the Gospel:

- In the fourth century A.D., the heretical bishop Nestorius denied Mary could be called *Theotokos* (“God-bearer”), or, Mother of God. He thought it blurred the distinction between Jesus’ divine and human natures. The Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431 condemned Nestorius and affirmed Mary as Mother of God.
- Like all Marian dogmas, Mary’s title of Mother of God says more about Jesus than it does about Mary. It affirms the fact that Jesus is fully God, yet fully man (see **CCC 464-483**).
- This Monday’s Gospel reading is a continuation of last Sunday’s for midnight Mass (Luke 2:1-14). The shepherds, upon hearing the angels’ message, rush to Bethlehem and tell Mary and Joseph (verse 17)—and whoever else will listen (verses 18, 20)—what they have seen and heard. This confirms that which was already announced beforehand in Luke 1:31-33, 46-55, and 68-79.
- At eight days old, Jesus is circumcised and formally given the name which the angel had revealed before his birth (Luke 1:31; Mark 1:21). Circumcision was the rite that incorporated Jewish males into the people of Israel (Genesis 17:9-14; Luke 1:57-66), just as baptism incorporates Christians into the new Israel, the Church (Colossians 2:11-12).

Questions:

- What does the Second reading tell us about the timing of the Incarnation of Christ? About the necessary conditions? About the reasons it needed to happen? About what it means for us?
- It is just a short walk from the traditional site of Shepherd’s Field to the area of Bethlehem where Jesus’ birthplace is located. Why do the shepherds feel they have to go “in haste”? Who else “went in haste” (Luke 1:39)? Why?
- How do you think Luke obtained all the information for these events which were actually witnessed by relatively few people (verses 19, 51)?
- What does Luke mean when he says that “Mary *kept* all these things, *reflecting* on them...”? What precious event has God done in your life that you “keep in your heart”?
- What is the significance of the name “Jesus” (verse 21, Luke 1:31; Mark 1:21; Acts 2:12)? What reverence should we have (and encourage others to have) for the Holy Name?
- What effect do you suppose the angels’ visit had on the shepherds? What effect has the knowledge of Christ’s birth had on you?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 430, 432, 434, 487, 466, 495, 527, 2599, 2677

Closing prayer

Mary was raised to the dignity of Mother of God rather for sinners than for the just, since Jesus Christ declares that he came to call not the just, but sinners. -St. Anselm

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

"He was called Jesus"

Scripture: *Luke 2:16-21*

And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Meditation: What's the significance of a name? For the Jewish people the giving of a name had great importance. When a name was given it represented what that person should be in the future. An unknown name meant that someone could not be completely known. To not acknowledge someone's name meant both denial of the person, destruction of their personality, and change in their destiny. A person's name expressed the reality of his or her being at its deepest level. A Jewish child was named at the time of circumcision, eight days after



birth. This rite was instituted by God as an outward sign to single out those who belonged to the chosen people. It was a sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham and his posterity.

In fulfillment of this precept, Mary's newborn child is given the name *Jesus* on the eighth day according to the Jewish custom. Joseph and Mary gave the name *Jesus* because that is the name given by God's messenger before Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb. This name signifies Jesus' identity and his mission. The literal Hebrew means *the Lord saves*. Since God alone can forgive sins, it is God who, in Jesus his eternal Son made man will save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). In the birth and naming of this child we see the wondrous design and plan of God in giving us a Savior who would bring us grace, mercy, and freedom from

the power of sin and the fear of death. The name *Jesus* signifies that the very name of God is present in the person of his Son who became man for our salvation. Peter the Apostle exclaimed that *there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved* (Acts 2:12). In the name of Jesus demons flee, cripples walk, the blind see, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised. His name is exalted far above every other name (Philippians 2:9-11). The name *Jesus* is at the heart of all Christian prayer. It is through and in Jesus that we pray to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. Many Christians have died with one word on the lips, the name of Jesus. Do you exalt the name of Jesus and pray with confidence in his name?

"Lord Jesus Christ, I exalt your name above every other name. For in you I have pardon, mercy, grace and victory over sin and death. You humbled yourself for my sake and for the sake of all sinners by sharing in our humanity and by dying on the cross. Help me to always praise your holy name and to live for your greater glory."

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