

Mary, the Mother of God (*Theotokos*) Octave of Christmas (Year ABC)

Numbers 6:22-27—the High Priestly Blessing

1. Moses' Instruction to Aaron on how to "bless the People"
2. Thus the priests shall put God's "name" upon the people of Israel

Psalm 67—May God Bless Us in His Mercy

1. Reiterates the priestly blessing of Aaron (67:1-2)
2. May the nations be glad (67:4)
3. May the peoples praise God and all the earth be blessed (67: 5-6)

Galatians 4:4-7—Born of a Woman

1. God "sent forth his Son, *born of a woman*": Paul's sole reference to Mary
2. We receive "Adoption as sons" through the "Spirit" being poured into our "hearts"

Luke 2:16-21—Mary Treasured These Things, Pondering Them in Her Heart

1. The Message of the Shepherds: "A Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (cf. Luke 2:11)
2. Responses to the Shepherd's Message:
 - a. All who heard it "wondered" or "were amazed" (Greek *thaumazō*)
 - b. Mary "kept all these things" (Greek *syntēreō*) (Luke 2:19)
 - c. "pondering them" or "piecing them together" (Greek *symballō*) in her heart"
 - d. Where could Luke have gotten this information?
3. The Circumcision of Jesus: the Octave of Christmas
 - a. Takes place after "eight days" (cf. Gen 17:12-13)
 - b. The Naming of Jesus: he is given "the name Jesus" ("the LORD saves")

The Living Tradition

1. Jan 1: feast of the Circumcision and Naming of Jesus
2. Mary, Mother of God: used to be on October 11th; Paul VI moved it to Jan 1
3. The New Year opens with a Priestly Blessing

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

1. Mary in the Gospels (CCC 495)
 - a. "Mother of Jesus" (John 1:1; 19:25)
 - b. "Mother of My Lord (Greek *Kyrios*)" (Luke 1:43)
2. Mother of God" *does not mean*
 - a. ~~Mary is 'greater' than God~~
 - b. ~~Mary is 'Mother of the Trinity'~~
3. Mother of God *does mean* that
 - a. The "eternal Son, the second Person of the Holy Trinity" is
 - b. Truly her Son "according to the flesh"

- 3. “Mother of God” or “God-Bearer” (Greek *Theotokos*)
 - a. One of Mary’s most ancient titles
 - b. Confessed at the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.)
 - c. Against the Nestorian heresy (CCC 466)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (Mary, Mother of God, Year ABC)

1. Why is the Solemnity of Mary Mother of God celebrated on January 1st? What feast used to be celebrated on this date, and how do the two go together?

2. Luke tells us that Mary’s response to the message of the Shepherds was to “treasure up” all “these things” and “ponder” or “piece them together” in her heart (Luke 2:19). How might we be more like Mary during this Christmas season?

3. Have you ever struggled with the title “Mother of God”? Do you know Christians who object to calling Mary the “Mother of God”? Why did Ancient Christians believe it was so important to confess that Mary was in fact the *Theotokos* (see CCC 466)?

For Further Reading

- 1. Catechism: Mary as Mother of God (CCC 466, 495)
- 2. Catechism: the circumcision of Jesus (CCC 527)
- 3. Benedict XVI, Homily, 1st January 2008 (available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20080101_world-day-peace.html)
- 4. Brant Pitre, *Mother of the Messiah* (Bible Study on CD; www.BrantPitre.com)