

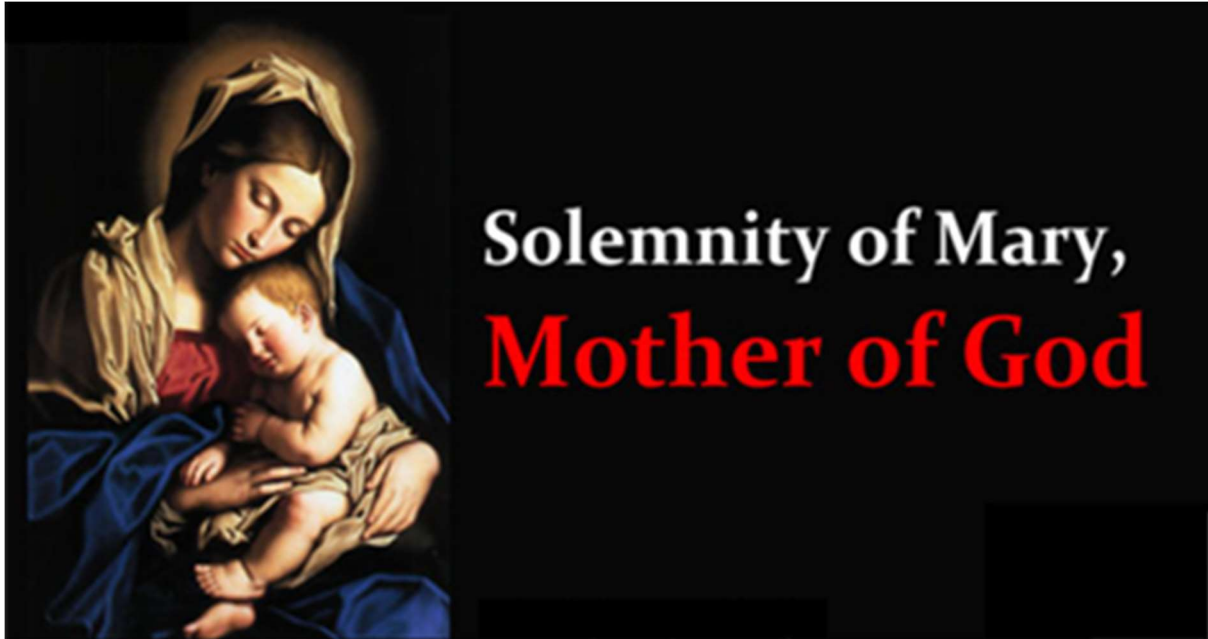


NEW YEAR'S DAY

The month of January was named after the Roman god Janus for his ability to turn one face to reflect upon the past and yet another face pointed upon the future. January marks the new year. A new beginning.

**Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.**

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 1850



SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

The Octave Day Christmas

SATURDAY, JANUARY 1, LUKE 2:16-21

(Numbers 6:22-27; Psalm 67; Galatians 4:4-7)

"And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart".

Mary and Joseph obeyed the law of Rome by going to Bethlehem to register for the census. They obeyed the religious law of Israel by having their child circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. In this ceremony, the child entered into the life of the Jewish community and received his name: Jesus (Hebrew:

Yeshua, "Yahweh saves"). Jesus' mother Mary was the model disciple who received the Word of God with faith, and pondered its meaning in her heart. The Church regards Mary as the "new Eve," whose "offspring" Jesus Christ, the one "born of a woman", was destined to defeat the Evil One.

The Title "Mother of God"

At the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE, the Church gave Mary the title "Theotokos" meaning "God-bearer." This Marian title is really a Christological statement: it affirms that the second person of the Trinity, Jesus, was born into history as fully human, and is truly 'God with us'. The tradition reaches to our own day. Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church includes Mary's role in a chapter on the Church, referring to Mary as the "Mother of God" 12 times. Because she cooperated in our redemption by bringing forth God's Son to redeem the world, she was also proclaimed the "Mother of the Church" (Pope Paul VI, 1964). Since Mary conceived Jesus, true man and true God, she is truly the mother of the Incarnate Jesus, and therefore, the Mother of God, and the

mother of everyone who believes in her Son.



WORLD DAY OF PEACE

Every year on January 1, the Holy Father marks the World Day of Peace with a special message inviting everyone to reflect on the important work of building peace. This year's message is the latest in a long tradition of messages for this day that began with St. Paul VI in 1967 and continued with St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and now Pope Francis.

2nd Sunday of Christmas

The Word of God is alive and present among us. Each time we listen to the scriptures, each time we celebrate the sacraments, each time we gather together in the Lord's name, he reveals himself to us.

The Lord has shown us the light of his truth.

Today's Readings

Ecclesiasticus 24:1-2. 8-12

Wisdom has taken root in God's people.

Ephesians 1:3-6. 15-18

We have been chosen to live through love in God's presence as God's adopted children.

John 1:1-18

The Word was made flesh and lived among us.

Reflection

The Gospel consists of what's called the prologue to John's Gospel. In this John introduces the main themes that he's going to develop in his Gospel — **life, light,**

darkness, truth, witness, glory, the world. You can't really understand it fully until you've read the whole Gospel. Through a summary of history, the prologue shows that from the dawn of creation God has been with humans, and, in spite of darkness and ignorance, has invited them to knowledge of and intimacy with himself.

But in Jesus something infinitely better is offered to us. In John's gospel, we see how the Son descends from heaven to our level, and ascends back to heaven bringing us up with him to the divine level. The prologue describes the Son in heaven and the descent; the Gospel describes the Son walking among us and his return to the Father.

The first part (1-11) presents the Son as the Word. Eternally present with God, the Word brings life and light to the world. Sadly, the world, and even his own people, rejected him. This negative response is some-thing that recurs throughout John's Gospel.

The second part (12-18) notes a more positive response. The Word becomes one of us and lives among us. To those who accept him he gives the power to become children of God.



The Epiphany of the Lord ***Holyday of Obligation***

On this feast of the Epiphany of the Lord we hear how the magi travelled in hope to find the infant king. We, like them, are called to be people of hope.

“Arise, shine out,” says the prophet, “for your light has come.” As we come into the Lord's presence today, let us ask forgiveness and mercy for the sins and failings that have kept us away from the light.

Today's Readings

Isaiah 60:1-6

Isaiah offers a promise of light, of tenderness and of abundance.

Ephesians 3:2-3. 5-6

God's grace is shown to Paul so that he may give it to others.

Matthew 2:1-12

In hope the wise men follow the star that leads to the light of Christ.



SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD
Thursday, 6 JANUARY, MATTHEW 2:1-12

Reflection

"We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage"

Matthew wrote his gospel for a Jewish audience to show that Jesus was the fulfilment of all their longings for a Messiah (see genealogy, Mt 1:1-17). He also wanted to show that God's salvation would reach "to the end of the earth" (Is 49:6). Matthew communicated this intention by having gentiles (Greek, *ethnos*) coming to visit the Holy Family in Bethlehem. These "wise men" (Greek: *magi*, astrologers) believed that a new star signalled the birth of a new ruler, and they

had "observed his star at its rising" (Nm 24:17). The magi came from the East, where the sun rises, and the star guided them to Jesus, the true light that was to come into the world. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they asked King Herod the Great where they could find the new-born king of the Jews. Herod's advisers told him that the prophet Micah foretold the birth of a Messiah in Bethlehem, the birthplace of David where he was also anointed king (Mi 5:2). Fearing that this child would be a threat to his throne, Herod sent the magi to search for the new-born king on the pretence of offering him homage. The star illuminated the way to the Christ child and Mary his mother. The magi offered the child Jesus gifts that signified his kingship (gold), priesthood (frankincense) and his saving death (myrrh, used in anointing the dead). The magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they returned "by another way" (v. 12). We are all invited to discover the Lord; however, after encountering Christ we cannot return to our old ways. We must travel in a different direction--the path that leads to Jesus.

NOTE: The word "epiphany" means a manifestation or an appearance of a supernatural being. Because the magi brought three gifts, legend made them "three kings," and they were later given the names Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar.