



Christ in Our Neighborhood

January 1, 2023

Prayer

Father in Heaven,
as we adore your Son who came to set us free, we honor Mary, the mother of Our Lord and God. Through her prayers and direction, we always follow her command regarding her Son, "Do whatever he tells you!" We ask this through Christ our Lord! Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Numbers 6:22-27

This Solemnity falls on the Octave (eighth day) of Christmas. It was once called the Feast of the Circumcision which - according to Mosaic law - occurs on the octave of the birth of the male child. It was also called the Feast of the Holy Name for on this day, the Lord was officially given his name, Jesus. It is now the Solemnity to celebrate the nature of Jesus, who is both of God and Mary: Thus, Mary is titled, the Mother of God.

In this short reading from Numbers, we see the importance and power of the name of God. Simply invoking the name of the Lord is itself a blessing to the Israelites.

Among the Jews, this Aaronic Blessing ("The Lord bless and keep you ...") is a profound blessing used primarily by men over 13 years of age and in relation to temple/priestly duties.

Within the Catholic tradition, bishops, priests, and deacons extend their hands over the priestly people of God (all the baptized) and offer this same blessing.

Questions

How are you blessed? How can we show greater love and respect for God's name?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Galatians 4:4-7

St. Paul reminds the Galatians that Christ is the Son of God, but born of a woman. Here, we see the nature of Jesus Christ. He is fully God and fully human.

The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, is a celebration of the nature of Christ as the God-man. There will never be a person like Him on the face of the earth.

Our nature is different. We are human - with a body and a soul. This is our nature. Thankfully, however, through the power of Christ's Spirit, we have a share in the divine (Godly) nature of Christ and are called sons of God. Paul reminds us that in Christ, we are no longer slaves to sin.

Our salvation comes through Christ who makes us heirs to the Kingdom of God. We are royal members of the household of God. By Grace, we have the privilege of calling God, "Abba" (an intimate word which means, "Daddy").

Question

How is God the Father "Abba" (or Daddy) to you?

Happy New Year!

Our Christ in Our Neighborhood team wishes you and your home peace in the new year.

May the Lord bless you and keep you in 2023 and forever.

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Commentary

Gospel: Luke 2:16-21

On this Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God, we celebrate Mary's uniqueness as Theotokos (Greek for *God bearer*). However, more than just a bearer of God, Mary gave to Jesus here real human DNA. More than the Ark of the Covenant made of human hands in which was placed the divine law, Mary is the new Ark in which was conceived the God-man, Jesus Christ.

Something radically new has begun. This is news worth pondering. Mary did just that. She pondered (kept) these things in her heart. This mystery requires a life-long reflection.

This is also news worth proclaiming.

Having witnessed the manger scene, the shepherds proclaimed the Good News, "glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen."

We are called to be those shepherds. We are called to proclaim the Good News that God was born of Mary and has come to save us.

The primary way in which we are to proclaim the Good News is through "glorifying and praising God" as well. As the song goes, we need to "go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!"

Question

How do you intend to proclaim the Good News of Christ this year?

This Week's Task

Consider reading something about Mary, the Mother of God. Often, Catholics are accused of worshipping her. We don't! But, many Catholics do not have an understanding of her role in our faith.

You may wish to go to the Catechism of the Catholic Church or read, *Mary: The Church at the Source* by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

Group Prayer

The group sings the following:

Go, tell it on the mountain
Over the hill and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born.

While shepherds kept there watching
Over silent flocks by night
Behold throughout the heavens
There shown a holy light.

Go tell it on the mountain
Over the hill and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born.

Down in a lowly manger
The humble Christ was born
And God send us salvation
That blessed Christmas morn.

Go, tell it on the mountain
Over the hill and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born.

Continue with Psalm 67

Psalm

Response: May God bless us in his mercy.

May God have pity on us and bless us;
may he let his face shine upon us.
So may your way be known upon earth;
among all nations, your salvation.

R. May God bless us in his mercy.

May the nations be glad and exult
because you rule the peoples in equity;
the nations on the earth you guide.

R. May God bless us in his mercy.

May the peoples praise you, O God;
may all the peoples praise you!
May God bless us,
and may all the ends of the earth fear him!

R. May God bless us in his mercy.

Conclude with an Our Father