



Bringing Home the Word

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother Of God (A)

January 1, 2023

Like the Morning Star

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

For the first four centuries following Jesus’ ascension, Christians grappled with understanding how his humanity and divinity commingled in his person. His humanity was evident to all who walked and talked with him. His divinity was also evident to his disciples because of the miracles he worked and his resurrection. In short, they knew he was fully human, and they knew he was fully God, but how could he be fully both at the same time?

The Council of Ephesus settled the issue definitively in 431. The Church declared that in the one person of Christ there are two natures: one divine and one human. This same council also declared, as a natural consequence, that the holy

virgin is the Mother of God (*Theotokos*), since she conceived and gave birth to the Word of God. So today’s feast is one of the oldest, shared by all Christians from the earliest times.

When Mary said yes to the Incarnation and gave birth to the Savior, all of us could bask in his divine light. She is like the morning star that first breaks the horizon and mirrors the light of the sun that she both foretells and follows. In loving Mary, we truly honor her Son. God was the first to praise her through Gabriel—“Hail, favored one!”—and the one who blessed her beyond all other creatures. We are merely following his example. +

A Word from Pope Francis

Looking at Mary with her Son in her arms, I think of young mothers and their children fleeing wars and famine or waiting in refugee camps. They are many!...If we become artisans of fraternity, we will be able to mend the threads of a world torn apart by war and violence.

Angelus, Rome, January 1, 2022



Sunday Readings

Numbers 6:22–27

“The LORD look upon you kindly and give you peace!”

Galatians 4:4–7

God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law....

Luke 2:16–21

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

In the year 431, the Council of Ephesus ruled that Christ has two natures: He is fully human, and fully divine.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- When my inner peace is threatened, do I quietly call on God?
- Is God asking me to say yes to something or someone today?

The Duty of God's Foot Soldiers

By Emily Blasik

Even if doing this feels small, volunteering in your community or simply loving your neighbors in a new way can make a difference.

Americans have had a few tough years. With mass shootings, violence, deep political divides, and more, our country seemed to be falling apart piece by piece.

On many mornings, I couldn't even bear to turn on the news. Everywhere you looked, tragedy was at the forefront. As a result, we saw a deep-seated fear envelop the hearts of many in an ununited United States: fear of the future, fear of the unknown, and even fear of our neighbors, all made evident by the sheer amount of hate and malice running rampant in our streets as well as our social media spheres. As we know, words can be weapons, too.

It's difficult to know what to do in these situations or how to react. Even harder still is discerning how to help. When tragedies strike—whether a natural disaster, mass shooting, or terrorist attack—we feel a certain amount of helplessness, like a spectator watching from the stands. This is how I felt after white nationalist protests made headlines. I was confused and hurt by the state of our country, but I didn't know how to help mend it.



At Mass one Sunday, God's message rang clear. The homily spoke to my heart: "Do not despair during these times, and most importantly, do not lose your faith in God," said our pastor, Fr. Mike. "We might not be able to change the world overnight, but we can make a difference where it counts: in our homes and in our communities."

As his words started to sink in, a

feeling of peace settled over me. When the ways of the world get us down, we have a choice: We can either spend all of our energy panicking and perhaps inspiring panic in others, or we can focus on causing change in our own circle of influence. Small as it may feel, volunteering in your community or simply loving your neighbors in a new way can make a difference. If you can donate money to those in need, do so. Lead with love, and the rest will follow.

While the holidays probably helped provide distractions from the year's drama, January brings us back to a sobering reality. What's next for our country? No one can be sure. Clearly, the problems remain unsolved, but whatever does happen, it's crucial to remember that God is with us. And we are his foot soldiers, showing the way for a better tomorrow. +

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Lord Jesus, so that we may imitate your mother and say yes to all God asks of us, we pray—Be born in us, be born in our world.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 2–7

Monday, Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen:
1 Jn 2:22–28 / Jn 1:19–28


Tuesday, Christmas Weekday:
1 Jn 2:29–3:6 / Jn 1:29–34

Wednesday, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton:
1 Jn 3:7–10 / Jn 1:35–42

Thursday, St. John Neumann:
1 Jn 3:11–21 / Jn 1:43–51

Friday, Christmas Weekday: 1 Jn 5:5–13 / Mk 1:7–11 or Lk 3:23–28 or 3:23, 31–34, 36, 38

Saturday, Christmas Weekday:
1 Jn 5:14–21 / Jn 2:1–11

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