

# Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God

## January 1, 2017 A

**Opening prayer:** *Father, source of light in every age, the Virgin conceived and bore your Son who is called Wonderful God, Prince of Peace. May her prayer, the gift of a mother's love, be your people's joy through all ages? May her response, born of a humble heart, draw your Spirit to rest on us your people. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**Sharing life:** How was your Christmas?

**Facilitator reads focus statement:** Our first reading speaks of blessing, the second reading speaks of Jesus as our brother, and the Gospel speaks of the wondrous event of God becoming man.

Read the assigned Scripture readings, pausing briefly after each one. Consider going over the commentary after each reading, if you have not done so prior to your meeting.

### FIRST READING: Numbers 6:22-27

Commenting on the first reading, the authors of *Living the Word 2014* write:

*The reading from Numbers is known as the "Priestly Blessing" and recounts the blessing that later Aaronite priests were to say over the people of Israel. Written in poetic form, the blessing outlines God's action toward the people (blessing, making his face shine upon them, lifting up God's countenance) and follows with the results of God's actions (keep you, be gracious, give peace). In response to this blessing, the Israelites were to bear God's name, making them a sign of God's presence, grace, and peace (Num 6:27).*

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM 67

This psalm is both a thanksgiving and a prayer of petition. For God to bless Israel is a witness to all nations of God's care.

### SECOND READING: Galatians 4:4-7

This reading is often chosen for Marian feasts because of the phrase "born of a woman." We can assume that Paul was not thinking of Mary in a special way. His phrase "born of a woman" simply means that Jesus is fully human. Yet from early on, the Church saw that Mary had a special role in our salvation. Also, upon reflection, the Church came to believe certain things about Mary. One such belief is that Mary is the Mother of the whole Christ (human and divine). This means that she is the Mother of God, even if God is the one who created her. The reading also beautifully underlines our sonship in Christ. If Christ is our brother through Mary, all of

us are adopted children of God. Because of our adoption, we call God "Abba"—a very endearing title meaning "dada" or father.

### GOSPEL: Luke 2:16-21

Commenting on this reading, Scripture scholar Fr. Michael Guinan writes:

*One week ago exactly, we heard Luke's account of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem and the appearance of the angels to shepherds in the field with the announcement of great joy: Glory to God in the highest and here below, on earth, peace. Today's feast has three aspects.*

*First, the shepherds went in haste to the manger, and made known the message that had been told them. What message was that? Glory to God, and peace on earth! All who heard the message were amazed. Perhaps it is a message that needs to be heard in our time as well. It is appropriate that, beginning in 1967, the popes have designated today as a World Day of Prayer for Peace.*

*Second, today is the feast of Mary as Mother of God. She kept all these things (words and happenings) and pondered them in her heart (in biblical thinking, the seat of thought as well as decision). Right from the start, Mary is a model disciple, to hear and ponder deeply what God has said and done and then to react accordingly (11:27-28).*

*Third, we commemorate the circumcision and naming of the child. Mary and Joseph are obedient to both the law of Moses (circumcision, Gn 17:9-14) and the angel's directions (1:31-33).*

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What verse spoke to you most and why?
2. The first reading speaks of blessing. What is the blessing in your life that you most appreciate and value?
3. Socrates tells us that “the unreflective life is not worth living.” In today’s Gospel, we find Mary pondering the events in her life. Would you say you are a reflective person? If so, how does a reflective spirit enrich your life?
4. What are your hopes for 2017? Name one resolution you would like to work on.

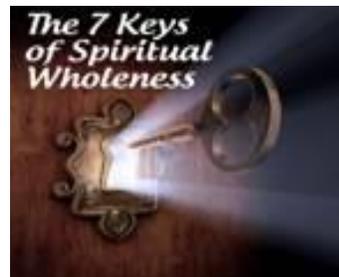
## RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

Name one way you can act on the readings. Suggestion: This week, take time to ponder the awesome reality that we are adopted children of God.

## CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF PETITION AND INTERCESSION ©

## Begin the New Year Energized!

Julianne Stanz Presents



Joy; Gratitude; Simplicity; Mercy; Prayer;  
Mission and Christ at the Heart

### A Day of Reflection

January 7, 2017, 8 am – 3 pm

Holy Name of Jesus Parish Indialantic, FL

**Tickets:** \$12 include breakfast & lunch

Contact: [sccspacecoast@gmail.com](mailto:sccspacecoast@gmail.com)

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