

# Mary Mother of God

Year A B C



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

**PSALM**  
Psalm 67:2-8

**SECOND READING**  
Galatians 4:4-7

**GOSPEL**  
Luke 2:16-21

## PRAYER

**Psalm 67:2-8**

May God be gracious to us  
and bless us;  
may his face shine upon us.  
So shall your way be known  
upon the earth,  
your victory  
among all the nations.  
May the peoples praise you, God;  
may all the peoples praise you!  
May the nations  
be glad and rejoice;  
for you judge the peoples  
with fairness,  
you guide the nations  
upon the earth.  
May the peoples praise you, God;  
may all the peoples praise you!  
The earth has yielded  
its harvest; God,  
our God, blesses us.  
May God bless us still;  
that the ends of the earth  
may revere him.

## Reading the Word

**First Reading**  
Numbers 6:22-27

The LORD said to Moses: Speak  
to Aaron and his sons and tell  
them: This is how you shall bless  
the Israelites. Say to them:

The LORD  
bless you and keep you!  
The LORD  
let his face shine upon you,  
and be gracious to you!  
The LORD  
look upon you kindly  
and give you peace!

So shall they invoke my name  
upon the Israelites, and I will  
bless them.

**Second Reading**  
Galatians 4:4-7

But when the fullness of time  
had come, God sent his Son,  
born of a woman, born under  
the law, to ransom those under  
the law, so that we might receive  
adoption. As proof that you are  
children, God sent the spirit of  
his Son into our hearts, crying  
out, "Abba, Father!" So you are  
no longer a slave but a child,  
and if a child then also an heir,  
through God.

**Gospel**  
Luke 2:16-21

So they went in haste and found  
Mary and Joseph, and the in-  
fant lying in the manger. When

they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them. When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

## HEARING THE WORD

### “The Channels of Blessing”

A new year, a new chapter in life, begins with the Church's celebration of the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Mother of God. This is a very purposeful choice because we are celebrating the life of a very special person in connection with the most important gift that came through her: God's blessing, of which Mary became the most splendid channel. Blessing in the Scripture is never merely a wishful prayer conferring a spiritual benefit upon a person blessed. From the very beginning of the Old Testament, blessing refers to the very concrete, and, at the same time, essential elements of human life in this world. This is evident in the opening chapter of the Bible, where the first blessing ever is pronounced upon the first human beings.

God “blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen 1:28). This first and original blessing of humanity is, in fact, the command to give life. Since God created the first life, the blessing and command given to humanity is to continue God's creative activity in continuing to bring human life into the world. God is the author of life; human beings are the channels through whom God continues to give life to the world. From then on, blessing in the biblical text continues to refer to those gifts of God which are necessary to create and support life. Thus, blessing means fertility, prosperity, security, and longevity. A blessed person lives a long life, surrounded by numerous children, secure in his or her own household. Blessing is something unmistakable and very visible; everybody recognises the blessed person. This is also the reason why individuals struggle to “get the blessing”, such as in the stories of Jacob and Esau. They fight to receive the blessing of their father, because they know that the one blessed will carry on the family name will live a successful and meaningful life. When, in the first reading, Aaron is given the command to bless the Israelites, the Lord God instructs him on the two essential aspects of blessing: that God be visible and gracious to the Israelites, and that God would give them

peace. Both of these: God's presence and security, are the essential elements of a good life. To be blessed, in the biblical sense, means live a secure and prosperous life in God's presence. How can such blessing be attained? The second and the third readings provide the answer: God's blessing comes to humanity in the fullest way through Jesus' presence and the work of the Holy Spirit.

In the second reading, St Paul explains that God sent his Son into the world in order to give us “adoption.” Adoption means that we become God's children; God becomes our Father whom we can call “Abba” – somebody intimately related to and linked to us. This intimate relationship is established by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Being guided by the Spirit means living in God's presence. In different words St Paul expresses the blessing of Aaron: when we live by the Spirit, the face of God shines upon us. The blessing that comes upon such life means freedom from all that enslaves a human being; it means freedom to be God's children, not governed or possessed by anything or anybody else. And this is true peace.

The Gospel narrates events surrounding Jesus's birth. Luke presents the meeting between shepherds and Jesus's parents, with focus on Mary. When the angels first appeared to the shepherds with the announcement of the Saviour's birth

they declared “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests” (Lk 2:14). They recognise that coming into the world, God’s Son comes with the very real gift: peace. Thus, Jesus is the bringer of peace. The peace that he brings cannot be understood merely as absence of war. Rather, it is the fullest expression of God’s blessing working in the midst of humanity through his Son. Mary was instrumental in bringing Jesus into the world. Hearing the shepherds’ proclamation, she reflects on what Jesus is to accomplish in this world, and will support him in the mission of bringing peace into the world. Even though his life will not be without suffering, ultimately he will restore peace between God and humanity by shedding his blood on the cross (cf. Col 1:20). In the person of Jesus blessing and peace become one in that they mean harmony between God and humanity, and within humanity itself, accomplished by him. Rightfully, when the Church celebrates Mary the Mother of God – the mother of the bringer of peace – it also celebrates the World Day of Peace.

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*Mary became  
the channel  
of the greatest  
blessing*

As we begin the New Year, we pray that God’s blessing might come and operate in our life. The ways to ensure that this happens is to allow oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, who makes God present in our life. The Presence of the Holy Spirit allows “God’s face to shine upon us”, as in Aaron’s blessing. We also need the presence of Jesus, the bringer of peace, so that another part of Aaron’s blessing, “May the Lord give you

peace”, can be ours. He taught humanity how to live a truly humane life, the life that can bring the blessing of peace into the human community, the blessing which shows itself in living the secure and prosperous life which God created us for.

The first parents were given the blessing and command to fill the world with life. Thus, they were entrusted with the mission of bringing blessing to the world. Mary became the channel of the greatest blessing, willingly offering her life and body to bring Jesus into the world. She became not only the mother of God, but also the Mother of Peace. The Christians, the descendants of the first parents and the spiritual children of Mary, themselves become the

channels of blessing when with the Psalmist they pray daily “May God’s face shine upon us so that God’s ways may be known upon the earth. May God bless us still, so that that the ends of the earth may revere him.”

## **LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD**

God created us as relational beings to enjoy the fullness of life through our relationship with God, others and creation. This is the state of blessedness and peace. Think for a moment about your experiences of joy, peace, loss, sadness and love. All of these moments are usually connected to our spiritual, personal and social relationships. We know from a personal experience that when our relationships with our families, friends and communities are harmonious we experience peace and joy. At a social level when there is justice, equal distribution of resources, freedom, care for the environment and good governance there is peace. Peace, therefore, is not just the absence of war or conflict but the presence of everything that promotes the flourishing of life. When there is conflict in our relationships at both personal and social levels, restoring peace is very difficult. In many cases it takes an outside person who is committed to peace, impartial and desiring the best for all concerned, to be a mediator or a channel of

peace. The mediator is often able to help the parties concerned to see the source of the conflict so that they can confront it and restore peace and harmony. Those who mediate peace, whether between friends, family or even nations, must be lovers of peace and truth, which can make them unpopular. In some cases, particularly in conflict situations, those who struggle for peace and justice face threats and dangers to their lives. Some have died without achieving their dreams, but their efforts have in the long run contributed to bringing peace. We can think of many in our national histories. Similarly, Christmas teaches us about loving God who loves humanity and identifies the conflict between human beings as primarily rooted in their broken relationships with God and each other. Two mediators become part of God's loving intervention, namely the Virgin Mary who offers her life to be the mother of Jesus, and Jesus himself who comes as the incarnation of God, that is God with us. Sacrifice and love characterize both the lives of the Virgin Mary and Jesus who become the channels of God's peace to humanity. Through their sacrifice a way has been opened for us to heal our broken relationship with God. This is the first step to healing our broken relationships with ourselves, others in our homes, workplaces, neighbourhoods, communities, countries and in the world. As we experience the

healing power of restored relationships and peace, we become channels of peace to the world following the path of Jesus and the Virgin Mary.

## PROVERB

*"Peace is costly  
but it is worth  
the expense."*

## ACTION

### Self-examination:

Reflect on conflicts in your life where there are broken relationships and lack of peace starting with your relationship with God, then relationships at home, work, neighbourhood, parish and community. Avoid blaming others, rather take responsibility for your part in the relationship and resolve to be a peace maker even if it is costly and difficult.

### Response to God:

God has an open door policy and has shown willingness to love you and be at peace with you at all cost - even the cost of the life of Jesus. Offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for this love and grace that forgives our sins and restores our relationship with God. Pray for strength to restore the broken relationships in your personal and social life.

### Response to your World:

Resolve to take one action that will restore a relationship in your life that has been broken.

Name the situation where your group can act as a peacemaker in your community and take appropriate action.

Are there any conflicts in the midst of your group? If so, discuss the ways to move beyond conflict.

## PRAYER

*In thanksgiving,  
let us pray together  
with the Virgin Mary:*

*My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit  
rejoices in God my Saviour,  
for he has looked  
on the humble estate  
of his servant.  
For behold,  
from now on all generations  
will call me blessed;  
for he who is mighty  
has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.*