

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

New Year's Day [Octave of Christmas]

Friday, 1 January 2021



World Day of Prayer for Peace

Keynote: The children of God are favoured

Book of Numbers 6: 22-27

The text represents a Hebrew blessing of the people. When God seems to 'hide face' it is seen as a sign of disfavour or rejection. But here *'The Lord's face shines'* on the people.

'May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord let his face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord uncover his face to keep you and bring you peace.' The smile of God's blessing being the sign of good favour. One has in mind the visitation by Mary to her cousin, and the sound of Elizabeth's welcome greeting: *'Rejoice, so highly favoured... Mary, do not be afraid: you have won God's favour.'*

Responsorial Psalm 66 (67) – A communal hymn of thanksgiving

Letter of Paul to the Galatians 4: 4-7

The proof that we are the children of God, is that the Spirit of his Son is in our hearts. Through the redeeming action of Christ, we have become heirs and true sons and daughters. *'God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts... you are not a slave anymore; and if God has made you a son (daughter), then he has made you heir.'* Thus God's favour is seen to rest upon us. We have good cause to smile and rejoice in the blessings we have received. To work in the coming year so God's favour and blessing may rest on all and we may all live in peace.

Gospel according to Luke 2: 16-21

This gospel reading is chosen for this octave day, the eighth day of Christmas, to mark the Jewish custom of circumcision. *'When the eighth day came and the child was circumcised, they gave him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before his conception.'* The boy child Jesus, by his circumcision, takes his place among the chosen people of God.

With good reason, we may join with Mary, *'she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.'* The Church invites us all to join together with all those in the Christmas events in *'glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.'*

Note

The Council of Ephesus (431AD) declared that Mary was *'theotokos'* (literally 'God-bearing') in order to emphasise the divinity of Jesus, at a time when the philosophical nature of the person of Jesus was in hot dispute as the Church tried to express creedal belief. Mary is seen as the woman of faith, who filled with grace, responds to God's call, and thus can provide a personal witness to the life, death and resurrection of her son Jesus. She truly bears the title *'theotokos'* – bearer of God, but the emphasis of this feast is really upon the person of her son Jesus.

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