



BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
January 1, 2025
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Numbers 6:22-27
Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6,8
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:16-21

Today, we as church, celebrate many events.

- What brings us together is the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, the day we recognize that Mary is not only the mother of the human infant Jesus, but that Mary is equally mother of God in the world.
- We also celebrate the 58th World Day of Peace, the theme of which is “Forgive us our trespasses; grant us your peace.”
- Of course, along with much of the world, we celebrate New Year’s Day 2025.
- And as Fr. Mike reminded us on Christmas this year Pope Francis has declared a jubilee year, calling us all to be “Pilgrims of Hope.”

Add in the scripture readings for today and this has the potential to become a very long set of reflections. I’ll try not to go too long.

It's rare that I pay much attention to the Gospel acclamation, but today I find that it ties these various strands together. Each of today’s commemorations, each of the readings is God speaking to us; each reveals a different aspect of who God is in the world, together they call us to respond, to a new way of being in the world.

During this Christmas season, of course, we celebrate the fullness of God’s self-revelation to us in Jesus; ending with Epiphany which we will celebrate in a few days. Today’s solemnity, Mary Mother of God commemorates the role that Mary played in God’s self-revelation—it was through her yes, that God’s self-revelation was made incarnate. And just as Mary bore both the fully human and fully divine nature of God into the world, so we are called to live fully human in this messy world, and also pointing to the divine in this messy world and beyond.

And the gospel tells us about another of Mary’s responses to God’s self-revelation. She “kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.” It’s a good reminder (and one that I often need) that not every response to God needs to be doing something; reflection is also a necessary response.

The shepherds in today’s gospel also give me hints on how to respond to such grandiose ideas as “World Day of Peace” and pilgrimage of hope. Although the United States is not actively at war (I had to check to make sure), with the situation in Ukraine and the Middle East, world peace seems hopelessly out of reach. And within myself, the uncertainty surrounding the future of the community often disturbs my personal sense of peace—I doubt I’m alone in that. As for being a pilgrim of hope, the last pilgrimage I tried to take, up Baboquivari mountain, to a sacred

cave on the Tohono O'odham nation proved to be quite beyond my abilities—I *can* say I stopped three quarters of the way up and waited with a student, but in all honesty, I almost certainly didn't have the physical stamina to continue climbing either.

But the shepherds in today's gospel, having encountered the infant Jesus, "return"—which seems to imply that they go back to their daily lives. They are not unchanged, though, they return glorifying and praising God. How, this makes me wonder, can I be transformed by my encounter with God? How can I work for peace in my daily life? How can I live a life of hope, even when the mountain seems waaay too high.

God speaks to us in many different ways in the scriptures and in our commemorations today. But isn't that true every day? With all that we have on our plates, it's sometimes hard to notice where God is present and how God might be calling us to respond to that presence. For me, that might be the biggest reminder of today: to remember to take time in busy-ness that is sure to be part of this New year to pay attention; to be open to encountering God and to respond to God's presence.

Happy New Year.