

MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD



Gentle and Loving

Loving God,
who is revealed through the simple birth
of your Son Jesus,
in the gentle and loving touch of Mary
and the secure and protecting touch
of Joseph,
help us to know you this day.
May our lives find a home with you,

and our families be secure under
your protection.
May the blessings of home, parents,
family, and community
be a spark of new life and profound love.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity
of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sunday, January 1, 2017

Treasure and Ponder in Your Heart

Today's Readings: Numbers 6:22–27; Psalm 67:2–3, 5, 6, 8; Galatians 4:4–7; Luke 2:16–21. Mary pondered the words of the shepherds in her heart. With Joseph, she understood the message the angel announced as one of God's love coming into the world. In every family, in every culture, the message of love in the birth of a child is a reflection of the greatest love of God joining our humanity as the infant Jesus. As St. Paul reminds us in his Letter to the Galatians, we are not just children of God—we are God's heirs.

The readings today are a blessing as we begin to understand the depth of the love of God at the birth of Mary's child. Mary shares Jesus' birth with more than Joseph and the shepherds and others who drop by. Mary becomes our mother, too, as she accepts giving birth in a stable on the edge of town, and as she welcomes the curious onlookers and the revelry of shepherds. As we reflect on our blessings, and treasure them in our hearts, may our celebrations in turn be a welcome to others to share in our joy.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, January 2

Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops

Sts. Basil and Gregory are two of the great doctors of the Church from the East. They worked toward unity of faith, particularly combatting heresies and articulating doctrine. The Letter from St. John stresses that we are to allow the Church's teachings to remain in us, and that we are to remain in the Son and the Father. How do you open yourself to do that? Let us pray today for unity of all Christians, East and West. *Today's Readings: 1 John 2:22–28; Psalm 98:1, 2–3ab, 3cd–4; John 1:19–28.*

Tuesday, January 3

See What Love the Father Has Given Us

It is still the Christmas season. Your crèche and your tree are still set out. Gather around the crèche, and take time to reflect on today's First Reading from 1 John, especially 3:1. "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are." Discuss this verse, along with John's emphasis that God is love. This might be your Christmas season Scripture verse to memorize and share. *Today's Readings: 1 John 2:29–3:6; Psalm 98:1, 3cd–4, 5–6; John 1:29–34.*

Wednesday, January 4

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious

The founder of the first Catholic school in the United States, Elizabeth Ann Seton was persistent in her faith, and in her desire to ensure that her children receive a solid education that included tenets of Catholicism. She is a model for families to hand on their faith to their children, as well as for catechists and Catholic school teachers. In your prayer today, be reminded of her words that "prayer is a habit of lifting the heart to God." *Today's Readings: 1 John 3:7–10; Psalm 98:1, 7–8, 9; John 1:35–42.*

Thursday, January 5

St. John Neumann, Bishop

John Neumann (1811–1860) was born in Bohemia but moved to the United States when he was ready for ordination, in 1836. He served the rural areas near Buffalo, New York, for four years, and then joined the Redemptorists in Pennsylvania. After he was named the bishop of Philadelphia in 1852, he served with the same tireless energy, building new churches and attracting Catholic immigrants to his parishes and schools, and providing them with his own catechisms. His ministries were directed to the poor, to children, and all works of mercy. *Today's Readings: 1 John 3:11–21; Psalm 100:1b–2, 3, 4, 5; John 1:43–51.*

Friday, January 6

St. André Bessette, Religious

Canonized in 2010, Brother André Bessette (1845–1937) served the sick from the entire area of Montreal, Canada, where he was born and lived his entire life. Accepted, after some initial concern, into the Congregation of the Holy Cross, he lived out his years as a doorkeeper, welcoming everyone who came to his door. His devotion to St. Joseph was particularly evident in the healings done by his hand using oil from a lamp. He insisted that he did not heal, but that it was St. Joseph who was the healer. *Today's Readings: 1 John 5:5–13; Psalm 147:12–13, 14–15, 19–20; Mark 1:7–11 or Luke 3:23–28 or 3:23, 31–34, 36, 38.*

Saturday, January 7

Whatever You Ask, God Hears

The First Reading today begins with a reminder that our prayers are heard: "He hears us in whatever we ask." However, prayer is not a demanding task, but one that reflects that we hear God as well. Mary reminds us in the Gospel to do whatever Jesus tells us. We must listen with ears of faith before we ask anything of God. Take a familiar prayer: pray it slowly, reflectively, and without distraction. *Today's Readings: 1 John 5:14–21; Psalm 149:1–2, 3–4, 5, 6a, 9b; John 2:1–11.*



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Keeping the Seasons
Reproducibles for Advent–Christmas 2016–2017