

THE MOTHER OF GOD

Readings

Numbers 6:22-27;

Psalm 67:2-6.8;

Galatians 4:4-7;

Luke 2:16-21

One of the most beautiful titles given to the Blessed Virgin Mary is Theotokos. Mary gives birth in time to the incarnate Son of God, and with His coming, the world will never be the same again. Indeed, "the fullness of time has come" (Gal 4:4) and Mary opens the door of the new year. There are 365 new days ahead of us. We want them to be filled with God's blessing, but it can only happen when Christ enters our lives. "God sent forth his Son begotten of a woman" (Gal 4: 4). It was Mary who brought forth Christ into the world, and it is Mary who can bring Christ into our lives.

Together with the shepherds, we throw everything and run to Bethlehem to see the infant lying in the manger (Luke 2:16). When we kneel down by the manger, we receive a blessing. It includes God's protection, mercy, grace and "shalom - peace," that is, prosperity, health and a sense of fulfillment. In Jesus we see the shining face of the Lord, because "He is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). In Jesus we find all the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). The coming of Christ into this world and into our lives is the confirmation of God's mercy and His kindness. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16).

Looking at the infant lying the manger, we cannot forget that He came "to redeem us" from the bondage of the Law (Gal 4: 5). Today, we gloss over the revolutionary message of this sentence. The holy Law given to the Israelites by Moses became impossible to bear. The first Pope compared this Law to a yoke, "which neither our fathers nor we could bear" (Acts 15:10). In the teaching of Saint Paul, Law, Sin and Death create a triad that enslave humans. "For sin, having received a stimulus by the commandment, deceived me and thereby killed

me" (Romans 7:11). It is from this bondage that Christ releases us. What a wonderful exchange. Instead of the stone tablets, the Holy Spirit, and instead of captivity, the freedom of God's children.

We begin the new year in freedom of God's children and full of blessing. The moment is coming to get up from our knees and return to our homes. Once again, we look at the scene of the Lord's birth, and in Mary pondering "all these words in her heart" (Luke 2:19), we find an invitation to prayer with the Scriptures. We are called to bring Christ to the world, but to make it possible, the Word of God must live in our hearts. Thus, we must read, ponder, and keep it in our hearts. "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ" (Saint Jerome). Let the daily reading of the Holy Bible become our New Year's resolution.