

# Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God



## Prayer for the New Year

O God,  
who brought the shepherds  
to Bethlehem  
with angel song in their hearts,  
teach us their simplicity.  
Show us how to follow Mary  
in her habits of cherishing  
and reflecting.  
Help us see the bright presence of  
your Son Jesus in our lives.  
As we begin a new year,  
bring us closer to you  
and to each other.  
We ask this through the same Lord  
Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and  
reigns with you in the unity of the Holy  
Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

## Sunday, January 1, 2012 Three Key Words

Today's Readings: Numbers 6:22–27; Psalm 67:2–3, 5, 6, 8 (2a); Galatians 4:4–7; Luke 2:16–21. Three words are touchstones in today's Gospel: *amazed*, *treasured*, *returned*. Why would God choose shepherds as heralds of his Son's birth? They were generally regarded as smelly and untrustworthy. Yet, perhaps because they were so unsophisticated and earthy, they could look beyond a scene which others might see as squalid (birth in a stable? a newborn in a feeding trough?). They had the grace to be amazed. Somehow, they saw the divine in the human, teaching us who follow to look for grace in unexpected circumstances.

Mary didn't seem surprised by what happened in Bethlehem; the angel's promise had prepared her for an

unusual son. But she *treasured* and reflected on what was happening. She models how we too should respond to the varied happenings of our days. Activity can easily become a blur unless we, like Mary, take time for quiet meditation. What is God showing me through these events, people, or places?

When the shepherds *returned*, it could have been as anti-climactic as the end of the holiday. After what was probably the greatest event of their lives, they went back to the routine of tending sheep. Instead of being disappointed, they praised and glorified God. They were different people. They carried within their hearts the rich truth: God dwells among us as one of us.



## This Week at Home

### Monday, January 2

#### Memorial of Saint Basil the Great and Saint Gregory Nazianzen

In today's Gospel passage, John the Baptist clarifies his role and relationship to Christ. The challenge to identify who Jesus is continued into the fourth century, when the saints we honor today—two friends—wrestled with heresy and wrote orations that were crucial to theological development in the early Church. Today's Readings: 1 John 2:22–28; Psalm 98:1, 2–3ab, 3cd–4 (3cd); John 1:19–28.

### Tuesday, January 3

#### Optional Memorial, Most Holy Name of Jesus

Imagine the delight of John the Baptist when he finally saw Jesus coming, this man he had so eagerly awaited. He calls Jesus the “Lamb of God,” a name we pray in the Mass. Most commentators agree that John was referring to the servant in Isaiah 53:7–12, who was compared to a lamb. What names for Jesus are most meaningful for you? Here's a start: Bread of Life, Prince of Peace, Light of the World, Savior, Friend, Divine Redeemer, Brother . . . complete the list. Children can make a paper chain, writing one name for Jesus on each link. Today's Readings: 1 John 2:29—3:6; Psalm 98:1, 3cd–4, 5–6 (3cd); John 1:29–34.

### Wednesday, January 4

#### Memorial of Elizabeth Ann Seton

Through her life, Saint Elizabeth (1774–1821) responded to Jesus' invitation in today's Gospel: “Come and see.” She experienced widowhood at age 29; conversion to Catholicism, which alienated her Episcopal relatives; the death of two teenage daughters; and the difficulties involved in founding two boarding schools—where she sometimes shoveled the snow off the beds in the morning! Her faith grew and sustained her

through every trial, and she retained her sense of humor and devotion to her three living children. Today's Readings: 1 John 3:7–10; Psalm 98:1, 7–8, 9 (3cd); John 1:35–42.

### Thursday, January 5

#### Memorial of Saint John Neumann

The interesting sequence in today's Gospel fits Saint John Neumann: Jesus finds Philip, who finds Nathanael, and we know the list continues. Unable to be ordained in his native Bohemia, John traveled to New York for ordination and service to the people there. Wanting community (like Philip and Nathanael), he joined the Redemptorists. As Bishop of Philadelphia, he was the first to organize a Catholic school system in the United States. Today's Readings: 1 John 3:11–21; Psalm 100:1b–2, 3, 4, 5 (2a); John 1:43–51.

### Friday, January 6

#### Optional Memorial of Saint André Bessette

It's refreshing to discover saints who didn't do gargantuan deeds but who had ordinary jobs like most of us. Saint André (1845–1937) was a Canadian brother of the Holy Cross who worked as a college doorkeeper for 40 years because he was illiterate and in poor health. His humility and kindness attracted many who asked for advice and healing. To those who wanted miracles, he replied, “I am only a man, just like you.” Today's Readings: 1 John 5:5–13; Psalm 147:12–13, 14–15, 19–20 (12a); Mark 1:7–11.

### Saturday, January 7

#### Jesus Revealing Himself

Today's Gospel is one in a trio of Jesus revealing himself: to the Magi at Epiphany, through his baptism by John, and by changing water into wine at Cana. In the Cana story, Mary is the ideal parent of a young adult. She simply states the need and doesn't nag or repeat. Today's Readings: 1 John 5:14–21; Psalm 149:1–2, 3–4, 5, 6a, 9b (see 4a); John 2:1–11.

