

# Daily Reflections



## MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

By David C. Robinson, SJ

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### Excerpts from Today's Readings

*This is how you shall bless the Israelites. Say to them: The LORD bless you and keep you! The LORD let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The LORD look upon you kindly and give you peace! So shall they invoke my name upon the Israelites, and I will bless them.*

#### **NUMBERS 6:23-27**

*As proof that you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then also an heir, through God.*

#### **GALATIANS 4:6-7**

*The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.*

## Reflection

When we come upon the title of today's feast—Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God—it might well lead us to reflect on the cosmic and the abstract. In the early centuries, theological thought struggled with the nature of Mary's role as Jesus' mother, how her humanity was united with the divinity of Jesus as Son of God. The arguments were heated and difficult. By the time of the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE, it was determined that Mary could be designated as the *Theotokos*, the source of Jesus' human life, while also carrying the divinity of God, without 'creating' it. These verities are unlikely to draw our spirits into a deep meditative state of wonder and surprise!

Today's readings invite us to a different level of discovery and understanding. Chapter 6 of Numbers opens with a detailed description of the Nazirite vow, a vocation within Jewish tradition in which a man or woman promised a deep fidelity to God, by forswearing wine or strong drink, refraining from cutting their hair, and avoiding contact with the dead. Later generations sometimes added a vow of celibacy to their Nazirite commitments. The second section of this chapter turns to the spirit of blessing that God brings to the chosen: "**This is how you shall bless the Israelites. Say to them: The LORD bless you and keep you! The LORD let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The LORD look upon you kindly and give you peace!**" This blessing embraces the graciousness and tender spirit very much associated with Mary as the mother of the Church. Hers is a heart of blessing, not of cosmic status or religious discipline. She brings freedom of soul from the very heart of God.

Paul's letter to the Galatians unfolds the fervent debate among the early Christian communities over the religious basis for salvation: faith or works. Works provide a formal structure by which to assess the value of one's religious and moral life. With the coming of Christ, such structure could be supplanted by a relationship of love with the God whose very nature abides fully in love: "**God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then also an heir, through God.**" Jesus always addresses God as his Abba, his 'daddy,' with a simplicity and trust that grounds all his life and ministry. Mary also models the same domestic humility in her movement in the world.

In Luke's gospel, the shepherds who are tending their flocks in the desolate spaces outside Jerusalem are the first to receive the revelation of the Messiah's coming into the world. The message is not the heritage of the rich or the powerful. Rather, it embraces those on the margins of society, who are God's specially chosen ones. Throughout the gospel, it is the *anawim*, the poor ones, who carry the truth of God's saving intentions for humanity. Mary, as mother of the faithful, is the patroness of those who are forgotten. She recognizes in the shepherds the core of God's family, who

are to receive her future care. She holds the mysteries of divine mercy and ‘reflects on them in her heart.’ This the core of her life as “Mother of God.”

On our own paths through life as Mary’s children, we are asked to receive those overlooked by the privileged, and to see in them God’s special saving message for all. This is not an abstract moral mandate, or a philosophical maxim. It is an invitation to approach each person with a maternal attention and affection that is Mary’s hallmark. As we come to imitate the Mother of God in the minutest particulars of our daily lives, we discover the very call of the angel to the shepherds, a call of boundless compassion and the endless simplicity of God’s own heart.

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Mary Holding the Infant Jesus  
Image created by David C. Robinson, SJ

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**For Pondering**

- What does it mean to you to say that Mary is the Mother of God?
- Are there aspects of her life that you see mirrored in your own life story?
- How would you help others to understand the model of Mary as an invitation to boundless love?

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