

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God • Year B • January 1, 2012

*Eternal God,
in times past you spoke
to our ancestors through
the prophets.
Now in these
last days, you
speak to us
through your
Son, Jesus
Christ.
Open our
ears to hear
his Word.
Open our hearts
to accept him, our Lord
and Savior. Amen.*



Sunday Word

Numbers 6:22–27
Psalm 67:2–3, 5, 6, 8
Galatians 4:4–7
Luke 2:16–21

Invoke the Name of God

God instructs Moses on how his people are to be blessed. A blessing is conferred by invoking the name of the Lord, asking that God's face shine upon and be gracious to the people.

Cry Out to God

God sends his Spirit into our hearts through Christ that we might receive adoption from him. We are his sons and daughters, heirs of a graced treasure made available to us in Jesus.

Make Haste to Bethlehem

Upon hearing the angel's message, the shepherds go in haste to see the infant lying in a manger. We too, in the Liturgy, make haste to Bethlehem to worship in spirit and in truth the Savior of the world.

Church Teaching: Mother of God

Our Spiritual Mother

As the new year begins, we turn to Mary. It is as if we wish to begin the new year on the right foot, so to speak, because Mary, the Mother of God, is a model *par excellence* of faith.

While Mary is pregnant, she visits her cousin Elizabeth, who is also pregnant with John the Baptist. Elizabeth cries out in greeting, describing Mary as "the mother of my Lord" (see Luke 1:43). The One whom Mary conceived as man by the Holy Spirit is none other than the Father's eternal Son, Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. For this reason, the Church acclaims Mary as *Theotokos*, Mother of God.

By virtue of the fact that she is the mother of Jesus, Mary is also mother to us, our spiritual mother. What do we learn from Mary about faith in the Lord?

A Gentle Mother

Mary shows us the way to embrace the Son of God, whom she tenderly held her own arms. Mary provides for us these valuable lessons:

- *Faith requires openness.* Mary describes herself as a lowly servant of God (see Luke 1:48). Mary exemplifies the type of humility necessary to be an instrument of God in this world. She is simply and profoundly open to God's initiative, giving of her total self to assist God in his plan of Salvation.
- *Faith is mystery.* At the angel Gabriel's message, Mary initially wonders at how she will be able to bear a child into the world since she has not had relations with a man (see Luke 1:34). The angel answers that she will be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. This "overshadowing" perhaps raises more questions than it answers, yet Mary trusts in the Lord's providence. She is comfortable with the awesome mystery of God in her life, content that God's goodness will provide for her as his plan unfolds.
- *Faith obeys.* Not everyone has an angel telling them a message from God, as did Mary. Yet we all are given direction from God on how to live our lives. We have God's Word in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. We have the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist. These treasures of faith help us say yes to God's will, as did Mary. God illuminates our lives to help us obey his prompting in our lives.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

Mary is accorded a singular honor with the title, Mother of God. This honor accrues to her not only because of her humble, open assent to God's will but because she is made holy by God from the first moment of her own conception. She is the appropriate vessel by which God is conceived and born into the world. The beauty within Mary, which the angel Gabriel announced as "full of grace," the "favored one" (see Luke 1:28) illustrates how the loving power of God penetrates this world to bring about Salvation.

For Reflection . . .

- How do you say yes to God and accept his love in the particulars of your daily life?
- Which of these three "lessons" from Mary speaks most to you and why?

Voices of Faith

Each one is a partaker of this spiritual origin in regeneration. To every one . . . reborn, the water of baptism is like the Virgin's womb, for the same Holy Spirit fills the font, who filled the Virgin.

—Saint Leo the Great

Just as the Virgin Mother pondered in her heart on the Word made flesh, so every individual soul and the entire Church are called during their earthly pilgrimage to wait for Christ who comes and to welcome him with faith and love ever new.

—Pope Benedict XVI

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 494 (Mary's assent leads to her motherhood), 495 (Mother of God), 2676 (Mary, ark of the covenant)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:

Chapter 12, especially the section entitled "Mary as Mother of the Church," pages 146–147

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:

95 (Mother of God), 97 (cooperating with God), 100 (Mary's spiritual motherhood)