

ctkAlive! Scripture Study
Feast of Mary,
Mother of Jesus
2022—A Cycle



What do I see?

Study “[The Angelus](#)” painting by [Jean-Francois Millet](#) (between 1856-1858). This prayer (our Opening Prayer this week) has been prayed by Christians since the 11th century. Ideally, it is prayed three times a day—in the morning, at noon, and at the end of the day.

How does the painting call me to prayer, not just at night or just in the morning, but to carry a prayerful spirit throughout the course of each day?

Opening Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

The Angelus

The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary...
and she conceived by the Holy Spirit.
Behold the handmaid of the Lord...
be it done unto me according to thy word.
The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

Pray for me, O Holy Mother of God,
that I may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.
Pour forth, I beseech you, O Lord,
your grace into my heart.
That all to whom the incarnation of Christ, your Son,
was made known by the message of an angel...
may by his passion and cross...
be brought to the glory of his resurrection...
through the same Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Source: [Beginning Catholic](#)

Scripture Readings

Numbers 6: 22-27 “The Lord bless and keep you! The Lord let his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.”

Psalm 67: 2-7 “May God have pity on us and bless us.”

Paul to the Galatians 4: 4-7 “When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman.”

Luke 2: 16-21 “The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem....”

Introduction to the Feast of Mary, Mother of Jesus

Today we embark on a new journey of 365 days. We set out on a new vision quest to discover who we are...again. What joys and sorrows will we experience over the coming days and months? Let's take a moment to step into this new year with the words of Cardinal [John Henry Newman](#)'s 19th Century prayer-poem “Lead, Kindly Light.”

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
lead me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home...
lead me on.
Keep Thou my feet;
I do not ask to see the distant scene;
one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed
that you should lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path;
but now lead me on.
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears, pride ruled my will;
remember not past years.
So long your power has blessed me,
sure it will still lead me on...
o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent,
till the night is gone;
and with the morn those angel faces smile,
which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

Let's resolve to carry the spirit of Newman's prayer in our minds and our hearts as we welcome this new year. Let's welcome both the *good* times and *difficult* times we will experience, trusting Mary, mother of Jesus, to be at our side each step of the way. So, new year, bring it on!

Readers of St. Luke's infancy narratives have a right to wonder where the evangelist got all his information, since he didn't know Christianity during Jesus' lifetime. Luke himself must have felt the need to explain his right to chronicle the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in his gospel... and the events of the early church in his "Acts of the Apostles." At the beginning of his gospel, Luke wrote:

"Many have undertaken to compile an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, like the accounts passed on to us by those who were eyewitnesses and servants of the word from the beginning. So it seemed good to me as well, because I have followed all things carefully from the beginning, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know for certain the things you were taught." (Theophilus may have been an individual person. It seems more likely, however, that Luke used the term generically for all "*Theophile*" ... "God-lovers.")

A Reading from the Book of Numbers (6: 22-27)

A priestly blessing

The Lord spoke to Moses: "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is the way you are to bless the Israelites.' Say to them:

"The Lord bless you and protect you;
The Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you
and give you peace."

So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.

Personal Reflection

This book gets its title "Numbers" from the fact that it begins and ends with a census of the Israelites. Many readers may find this book dry and dated, because it devotes many chapters to the laws and customs of Israel. In this it bears a similarity to the Book of Leviticus which preceded it.

[Rev. David Platt's](#) online commentary on this passage merits our attention: "Just get that image in your mind, for the God of the universe to cause his face to shine, to smile upon you and your life, his favor to be yours, his grace to be yours, which makes obvious sense because we don't deserve this. ...The holy God of the universe, in light of our sinfulness and rebellion against him, for his face to be shining on us, that is pure, unadulterated grace and mercy."

(David Platt serves as a pastor in metro Washington, D.C. He founded and serves as chairman of "[Radical](#)" and authored [Something Needs to Change](#).)

Recite to yourself *vocally* the five blessing lines Yahweh spoke to [Moses](#) to pass on to his brother Aaron and all the wandering Israelites, as if you hear God speaking them to you personally (because God really *is* speaking them to you).

— *How does it feel to have those words spoken to me... the "me" I am today with all my virtues and shortcomings?*

Responsorial: Psalm 67 (2-3, 5-7)

A harvest song

May God bless us in his mercy.

Then those living on earth
will know what you are like;
all nations will know
how you deliver your people.
May God bless us in his mercy.

Let the nations thank you.
Let the nations thank you, O God!
Let all the nations thank you!
May God bless us in his mercy.

The earth yields its crops.
May God, our God, bless us!
May God bless us!
Then all the ends of the earth
will give him the honor he deserves
May God bless us in his mercy.

Personal Reflection

This joyful and grateful song followed a successful harvest. The psalmist, however, rises above his own selfish considerations. The triumph of a good harvest—or industrial prosperity—should make all of us think of places in the world where harvests fail due to weather or warfare. Yes, we believe Yahweh wants to provide abundant harvests and all peoples to enjoy equal status in Yahweh's image. If Yahweh rules the whole world with justice, we must try to imitate him. Throughout human history, failure to be God-like has always gotten us in trouble... of our own making.

The spirit of this psalm found its way into the beginning of St Paul's letter to the Ephesians (1: 3): "Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ." We pray this psalm to give thanks for the goods of the earth.

On CNN this last week of 2022, we have witnessed the generosity of citizens of El Paso, Texas, who bring food and clothing to Latin American migrants whom the U.S. Border Patrol have allowed to enter the United States.

— *When I shop at the grocery store, how mindful am I of all those in the world dependent on the kindness of others to stay alive?*

— *What more can I do than I am now to reach out to those in need, close to where I live?*

A Reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians (4: 4-7)

"When the appropriate time had come, God sent out his Son, born of a woman, born under the [Jewish] law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we may be adopted as sons with full rights. And because you are sons and daughters, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who calls 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if you are a son, then you are also an heir through God."

Personal Reflection

Galatia in Paul's lifetime was a northern province of today's Turkey. He stayed there when an illness had prevented him from pursuing his journey (Acts 16: 6 and Galatians 4: 13-14). He visited the Galatians again (Acts 18: 23) before settling in Ephesus. Paul had the confidence to ask them to send money to the poor Christians residing in Jerusalem (see First Corinthians 16: 1).

Paul wrote this letter because the community teetered on the verge of division. Suffering tensions and doubts, some Jewish converts in the Galatian community wanted to go back to their old religious practices. He made no mention of the scandals, laxity, or conflicts with those in authority within their community. Instead, he stressed the positive benefits of their new faith in Christ Jesus. Paul reminded them that being Christian primarily meant *living* one's faith rather than practicing a *religion*.

— *As I reflect on my life as a Christian, which of these two visions dominates my belief system? "Living my faith?"... or "Practicing my faith?" What changes of emphasis does this new year invite me to make? How willing am I to place more emphasis on living my faith?*

The Gospel According to Luke (2: 16-21)

"The shepherds hurried off and located Mary and Joseph. They found the baby lying in a manger. When they saw him, they related what they had been told about this child, and all who heard it were astonished at what the shepherds said.

"Mary treasured all these words, pondering in her heart what they might mean. So the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; everything was just as they had been told.

"At the end of eight days, when the baby was circumcised, they named him Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb."

Personal Reflection

"Mary treasured all these words," because every event of her life matched the way God revealed the divine plan, more so now that she lived with the child whose coming she consented to of her own free will. Yes, she had wondered, she had marveled... but suffered no confusion. Her faith never wavered. However, like us, Mary too had to discover the ways of salvation as they evolved—slowly and at times painfully—during the life of her son. For the present she pondered events as they happened until the time of the Resurrection and Pentecost, when all the words and deeds of her son became clear.

— *What memories of God's mysterious action in my life do I cherish... and still wonder at as I get older?*

— *What positive actions have I taken, both internal and external, over the course of my life as I have done my own "pondering"?*

For Inspirational Watching and Listening

Watch

["Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God"](#) by [John Michael Talbot](#)

Listen

["The Shepherd's Song \(God With Us\)"](#) by [Hearts of Saints](#)

["O Holy Night,"](#) sung by [Josh Groban](#)

Journaling Prompts

Based on this weekend's Scripture readings, what does the Christ Child ask me to do TODAY regarding...

(1) the quality of the love I bring to my personal relationships...

and

(2) my life as an emissary of Christ, committed to bringing God's love to the people with whom I interact in person and on social media?

*Who needs to receive from me this week a moment of laughter and personal concern?
Why do I hesitate?*

In light of this weekend's Scriptures, take some time to write about events occurring in your life this week and what you see happening in the world.

Preview of Next Weekend's Scriptures

Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord

Isaiah 60: 1-6 "Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem!"

Psalms 72: 1-2, 7-8, 10-13 "Justice shall flower in his days."

Ephesians 3: 2-3, 5-6 "The Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body."

Matthew 2: 1-12 "Behold, magi came from the east and arrived in Jerusalem."

Closing Prayer

(adapted and abridged for use here)

Memorare (Remember)

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known
that anyone who fled to your protection,

implored your help,
or sought your intercession,
was left unaided.
Inspired by this confidence,
I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.
To you do I come, before you I stand,
sinful and sorrowful.
Mother of the Word Incarnate,
in your mercy, hear and answer me.
Amen

Source: [Mount St. Joseph University](#)

NOTE: The Feast of the Holy Family falls in the liturgy on Saturday, December 30, 2022.



by iconographer [Kelly Latimore](#) (2009)

Source: [Future Church](#)

*In this time of Latin migrants at the southern U.S. border,
what does the above painting say to me about the Feast of the Holy Family?
(permission pending)*

Gender usage in these reflections: We are conscious of gender references to God in the Scripture texts. Often, attempts to rewrite these passages result in awkward sentence structures. We have left the biblical translations as they are but do our best to be inclusive in all other parts of the reflection.

The Sunday readings are from the New English Translation (NET)
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