



SAINT ANTHONY CATHOLIC CHURCH

EL SEGUNDO, CALIFORNIA

www.stanthonyes.com

(310) 322-4392

January 1, 2023

Mary, the Holy Mother of God

*The shepherds
went in haste to
Bethlehem and found
Mary and Joseph,*

*and the infant
lying in the manger.*

Luke 2:16



Copyright © J.S. Paluch Co., Inc. Photos © Hewitt/Retna
Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass © 2011, 1988, 1982, 1970, CCC

Mass Times

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Monday, Wednesday & Friday | 8:00am |
| Tuesday & Thursday | 12:10pm |
| Saturday | 4:00pm |
| Sunday | 8:00am; 10:00am & 4:00pm |
| Sunday (Spanish) | 12:00 Noon |
| Sunday (Latin) | 1:30 pm |

Eucharistic Adoration Chapel

Located at the Parish Center
Mon-Thurs: 9:00am – 4:30pm

Parish Center Office Hours

Monday - Thursday
8:30 am - 5:00 pm
Friday, Saturday, and Sunday
by appointment only

Confessions

Saturdays 3:00 pm

**Your Donations
Make a Difference!**



SCAN OUR QR CODE
VISIT US AT

WWW.STANTHONYES.COM



*World Day
of Prayer
for Peace*

Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co., Inc.



*Happy
New Year!*

Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co., Inc.

In place of Fr. Paul letter...

Pope Francis' Audience on Discernment

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning, and welcome!

Let us continue –we are concluding– the catechesis on discernment. Anyone who has been following this catechesis until now might think: what a complicated practice discernment is! In reality, it is life that is complicated and, if we do not learn how to read it, as complicated as it is, we risk wasting our lives, using strategies that end up disheartening us.

During our first meeting, we saw that every day, whether we want to or not, we always perform acts of discernment concerning what we eat, read, at work, in our relationships, everything. Life always presents choices to us, and if we do not make conscious choices, in the end it is life that chooses for us, taking us where we do not want to go. Discernment, however, is not done alone. Today, let us look more specifically at *several aids* in this regard that can facilitate this indispensable exercise of discernment in the spiritual life, even if in some ways we have already encountered them in the course of this catechesis. But a summary will help us a lot.

One of the first indispensable aids is evaluating with the *Word of God* and the *doctrine of the Church*. They help us read what is stirring in our hearts, learning to recognize God's voice and to distinguish it from other voices that seem to vie for our attention, but leave us confused in the end. The Bible warns us that God's voice resounds in stillness, in attention, in silence. Let us recall the experience of the Prophet Elijah: the Lord does not speak to him in the wind that smashes the rocks, nor in the fire or the earthquake, but He speaks to him in a light breeze (cf. *1 Kings* 19:11-12). This is a very beautiful image that helps us understand how God speaks. God's voice does not impose itself; God's voice is discreet, respectful – allow me to say, God's voice is humble – and, for that reason, produces peace. And it is only in peace that we can enter profoundly into ourselves and recognize the authentic desires the Lord has placed in our hearts. Many times it is not easy to enter into that peace of heart because we are so busy with this, that and the other, the entire day... But, please, calm yourself down a little bit, enter into yourself, within yourself. Stop for two minutes. Witness what your heart is feeling. Let's do this, brothers and sisters, it will help us so much because at that moment of calm, the Lord's voice immediately tells, "Well, look here, look at that, what you are doing is good...". When we allow ourselves to be calm, God's voice comes immediately. He is waiting for us to do this.

For the believer, the Word of God is not simply a text to read. The Word of God is a living presence, it is a work of the Holy Spirit that comforts, instructs, gives light, strength, refreshment, and a zest for life. To read the Bible, to read a piece, one or two passages of the Bible, is like a short telegram from God that immediately goes to the heart. The Word of God is a bit – and I am not exaggerating here – it is a little, real foretaste of heaven. A great saint and pastor, Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, understood this well, when he wrote: "When I read Sacred Scripture, God returns and walks in the earthly paradise" (*Letters*, 49.3). With the Bible, we open the door to God who is taking a walk. Interesting.

This affective relationship with the Bible, with Scripture, with the Gospel, leads us to experience an affective relationship with the Lord Jesus. Let's not be afraid of this! Heart speaks to heart. And this is another indispensable aid that is not to be taken for granted. We can often have a distorted idea about God, thinking of him as a sullen judge, a harsh judge, ready to catch us in the act. On the contrary, Jesus reveals a God who is full of compassion and tenderness for us, ready to sacrifice himself so he can come to us, just like the father in the parable of the prodigal son (cf. *Lk* 15:11-32). One time, someone asked – I don't know if it was a mother or a grandmother who told me this – "What do I need to do in this moment?" – "Well, listen to God, he will tell you what you should do. Open your heart to God". This is good advice. I remember one time, there was a pilgrimage of young people done once a year to the Shrine of [Our Lady of] Lujan, 70 km away from Buenos Aires. It takes the whole day to travel there. I used to hear confessions during the night. A young man, who was about 22 years old, came completely covered with tattoos... "My God", I thought, "who is this person?" And he said to me, "You know, I came because I have a serious problem, and I told my mother, and my mother told me, 'Go to Our Lady. Make a pilgrimage and Our Lady will tell you'. And I came. I was in touch with the Bible here. I listened to the Word of God and it touched my heart and I need to do this, this, this, this". The Word of God touches the heart

(cont.)

and changes your life. And I have witnessed this many times. Because the Lord does not want to destroy us. God wants us to be stronger, better, every day.

Anyone who remains in front of the Crucifix senses newfound peace, learns not to be afraid of God because on the cross, Jesus does not frighten anyone. It is the image of complete weakness, and, at the same time, of total love, capable of facing any trial for us. The saints always gravitated toward Jesus Crucified. The account of Jesus' Passion is the surest way to face evil without being overwhelmed by it. There is no judgement there, not even resignation, because it is shot through with the greatest light, the light of Easter, that allows us to see in those terrible deeds a greater plan that no impediment, obstacle or failure can thwart. The Word of God always makes us look at another side – that is, the cross is here, this is awful, but there is something else, hope, resurrection. The Word of God opens every door because He is the door. He is the Lord. Let us pick up the Gospel, take the Bible in our hands – 5 minutes a day, no more. Carry a pocket-size Gospel with you, in your purse, and when you are traveling, read it a bit. Read a small passage during the day. Allow the Word of God to draw near to your heart. Do this and you will see how your lives will change, with the proximity of the Word of God. "Yes, Father, but I am used to reading the lives of the saints". This is good. But do not neglect the Word of God. Take the Gospel with you. One minute every day....

It is very beautiful to think of our life with the Lord as a relationship with a friend which grows day by day. Friendship with God. Have you ever thought about this? Yet, this is the way! Let's think about God who gives us... doesn't God give us so much? God loves us, He wants us to be his friends. Friendship with God is able to change the heart. Piety is one of the great gifts of the Holy Spirit, which gives us the ability to recognize God's fatherhood. We have a tender Father, an affectionate Father, a Father who loves us, who has always loved us. When we experience this, our hearts melt and doubts, fears, feelings of unworthiness are dissolved. Nothing can hinder this love that comes from being in contact with the Lord.

And this love reminds us of another great help, *the gift of the Holy Spirit*, who is present in us and who instructs us, makes the Word of God that we read come alive, suggests new meanings, opens doors that seem closed, indicates paths in life where there seem to be only darkness and confusion. I ask you – Do you pray to the Holy Spirit? But who is he? The Great Unknown One. Sure, we pray to the Father with the Our Father. We pray to Jesus. But we forget the Spirit! One time when I was doing catechesis with children, I asked the question, "Which one of you knows who the Holy Spirit is?" And one of them said, "I know!" – "And who is he?" – "The paralytic", he answered me! He had heard, "the Paraclete", but thought that it was "paralytic". How often – this made me think – the Holy Spirit is over there like a Person who doesn't count. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives life to the soul! Let him enter. Speak with the Holy Spirit just like you speak with the Father, like you speak with the Son. Speak with the Holy Spirit – who is anything but paralyzed, right? He is the Church's strength, he is the one who will lead you forward. The Holy Spirit is discernment in act, the presence of God in us. He is the gift, the greatest gift the Father assures to those who ask (cf. *Lk* 11:13). And what did Jesus call him? "The gift" – "Remain here in Jerusalem and wait for the *gift of God*", which is the Holy Spirit. It is interesting to live our lives in friendship with the Holy Spirit. He changes you. He makes you grow.

The Liturgy of the Hours opens the main moments of daily prayer with this invocation: "O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me". "Lord, help me!" because by myself I cannot move ahead, I cannot love, I cannot live.... This invocation for salvation is the uncontainable request that flows from the depths of our being. The goal of discernment is to recognize the salvation God is working in my life. It reminds me that I am never alone and that, if I am struggling, it is because the stakes of the game are high. The Holy Spirit is always with us. "Oh, Father, I've done something really bad. I need to go to confession. I cannot do anything..." Okay, you've done something awful? Talk to the Spirit who is with you and tell him, "Help me, I did this really awful thing..." Never abandon this dialogue with the Holy Spirit. "Father, I am in mortal sin" – that does not matter. Speak with Him so that he will help you and forgive you. Never abandon this dialogue with the Holy Spirit. And with these aids the Lord gives to us, there is no need to be afraid. Keep going forward, courageously and joyfully!

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2022.html>

Note to all our Parishioners:

Due to early publisher's submission due date (12/21), previous Sunday Collection is not currently available and news may be dated.

The Parish Center offices will be closed on **Monday, January 2nd** in honor of the New Year. We will reopen our doors on Tuesday, January 3rd at 8:30am.

Thank you for generous your Donations
**Collections for the weekend of
December 18, 2022**
Masses

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Saturday 4:00pm | \$ 1,198.00 |
| Sunday 8:00am | \$ 1,048.00 |
| Sunday 10:00am | \$ 1,808.00 |
| Sunday 12:00pm | \$ 1,655.00 |
| Sunday 1:30pm | \$ 1,101.00 |
| Sunday 4:00pm | \$ 755.00 |
| Mail-in Donations | \$ 1,095.00 |
| Online Giving | \$ 896.00 |
| Total: | \$ 9,556.00 |

Thank you...

... to all who helped with the environment and make our celebration of Christmas a joyful occasion.

WEEKLY CALENDAR**Sunday, January 1****Solemnity of Mary, The Holy Mother of God****Monday, January 2****Parish Center & Adoration Chapel Closed**

8:00am Morning Mass

Tuesday, January 3**Parish Center & Adoration Chapel Open**

12:10pm Mid-day Mass

Wednesday, January 4**Parish Office & Adoration Chapel Open**

8:00am Morning Mass

Thursday, January 5**Parish Office & Adoration Chapel Open**

12:10pm Mid-day Mass

Friday, January 6**Parish Center & Adoration Chapel Closed**

8:00am Morning Mass

8:30am Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

12:00pm Repose of the Blessed Sacrament

Saturday, January 7**Parish Center & Adoration Chapel Closed**

12:00pm Private Baptism - Guerrero

3:00pm Confessions

4:00pm Vigil Mass



| | |
|--|---|
| SATURDAY 4:00pm | December 31 James & Claire Bellomy (PI) & John & Maggie Bellomy (PI) |
| SUNDAY 8:00am 10:00am 12:00 pm 1:30pm 4:00pm | January 1 Edward M. Vigil (D) In Thanksgiving to the Blessed Mother Samuel Castellanos (D) For all Parishioners Mary Ruane (D) |
| MONDAY 8:00 am | January 2 Felino de Castro (D) |
| TUESDAY 12:10pm | January 3 Dsvid Smith & John Doe (PI) |
| WEDNESDAY 8:00 am | January 4 Carl Rodrick (D) & Geronimo Alvarado (D) |
| THURSDAY 12:10pm | January 5 In Thanksgiving to God |
| FRIDAY 8:00am | January 6 Eddy Leiva Jr (PI) |
| SATURDAY 4:00pm | January 7 Paul Talley PI) |

**Please Pray for the Sick**

Bishop Alex Aclan, Badiha, Bassam & Zaina Alwan, Emmanuel Angeles, Hortencia Aqueche, Emmanuel Barba, Nheza Banzon, Maureen & Tom Blum, Jose Luis Cabellos, Teresa Calderon, Bill & Sandy Caldwell, Eva & Roberto Canales, Susanna and David Castellanos, Teresita Clemente, John Coniglio, Marco Antonio Diaz, Juan Antonio Duran, Bernadette Ekpendu, Howard Fausto, Lisa Garasic, Rose Garcia, Joaquin Gonzalez, Victor & Maria Luz Gonzalez, Lucille Goodreau, Marian Goyette, Marie Gutierrez, Steve Hansen, Eileen Hawkins, Michelina Kubek, Victor Marious, James McIntyre, Susan McGarry, Alberto & Nelly Mercado, Joseph Mitschiener, Anthony Molina, Ana Mostafania, Virginia & Michael Mouzakis, Emma Paredes, Leoncio Ricarte, Don Riley, Lyssa Roberts, Martha Salazar, Paul Valenzuela, Fr. Pasquale Vuoso CRIC, Tony Ward, Meghan Warren, Penny Wilder, Gail Williams.



Pregnancy Help Center

"In time when I was scared and confused, you made me feel cared about. I don't know what I would have done without you. This child is such a blessing."

Pregnancy Help Center
(310) 787-4357 - 24-hour help line

Ongoing CASE Collection



St. Anthony Church continues its ongoing CASE Drive for all those families in need in our community. Some families receive a small monetary aid to help with utilities bills.

CASE's hope is to keep these families in their home and not become

homeless. **Items needed in their food pantry include:** canned meat foods, canned soups, spaghetti sauce, pasta, canned fruits, cookies, crackers, tea, instant coffee, evaporated or dry milk, fruit juices, toilet paper, shampoo, toothpaste, soap, tissues/Kleenex, and cleaning supplies, dish soaps, laundry detergent, Comet, Lysol, etc....

A bin for your donated items can be found at the crying room. Thanks for your continue support for these families in need.



Solemn Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

First Friday— January 6th is First Friday and we will have mass at 8:00 am in the Church. **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will take place after the 8:00 am mass.** Benediction will take place at 12:00 pm in the Church. If you would like to spend one hour before the Blessed Sacrament, please call Elizabeth Swenson at the Parish Office (310) 322-4392.

RCIA/Adult Faith Formation

Are you someone or do you know someone who would like to become Catholic? The RCIA is a process of conversion that provides faith formation, spiritual enrichment and preparation of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist; baptized adults in other Christian churches who wish to profess their faith through the Catholic church and requests the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist and baptized Catholics who seek to complete the sacrament of initiation. We meet every Thursday at 7:15pm. For more information, please contact Tim Rodrick at (310) 322-4392 on Mondays or Thursdays.

WHY BE REGISTERED IN THE PARISH?

When you live within this parish boundaries, you belong to St. Anthony Parish. If you are registered in the parish, we are also able to provide you with tax information for your filings. You may download the registration form from our website, www.stanthonyes.com.

St. Anthony Church Mission Statement:

We the St. Anthony community, blessed with diversity in culture and traditions, unite ourselves to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. We commit ourselves to live out the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ through prayer, service, and actions.

World Day of Peace

Every year on January 1, the Holy Father marks the World Day of Peace with a special message inviting all people to reflect on the important work of building peace. This year's message is the latest in a long tradition of messages for this day that began with St. Paul VI in 1967 and continued with St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis.

Pope Francis: Prayer for Peace

Lord God of peace, hear our prayer!

We have tried so many times and over so many years to resolve our conflicts by our own powers and by the force of our arms. How many moments of hostility and darkness have we experienced; how much blood has been shed; how many lives have been shattered; how many hopes have been buried... But our efforts have been in vain.

Now, Lord, come to our aid! Grant us peace, teach us peace; guide our steps in the way of peace. Open our eyes and our hearts, and give us the courage to say: "Never again war!"; "With war everything is lost". Instill in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace.

Lord, God of Abraham, God of the Prophets, God of Love, you created us and you call us to live as brothers and sisters. Give us the strength daily to be instruments of peace; enable us to see everyone who crosses our path as our brother or sister. Make us sensitive to the plea of our citizens who entreat us to turn our weapons of war into implements of peace, our trepidation into confident trust, and our quarreling into forgiveness.

Keep alive within us the flame of hope, so that with patience and perseverance we may opt for dialogue and reconciliation. In this way may peace triumph at last, and may the words "division", "hatred" and "war" be banished from the heart of every man and woman. Lord, defuse the violence of our tongues and our hands. Renew our hearts and minds, so that the word which always brings us together will be "brother", and our way of life will always be that of: Shalom, Peace, Salaam!

Amen.

- www.usccb.org

Holy Habits: New Year's Resolutions

1. Give return on your gifts. Say a prayer for the giver.
2. Commit random acts of prayer. Pray for a person throughout your day.
3. See Jesus more often. Visit Jesus in the Tabernacle.
4. Read the Word. Read the Bible every day.
5. Become invisible. Look for ways to do good.

En lugar del mensaje del Padre Paul...

Última catequesis sobre la oración: en Jesús encontramos salvación total

El Papa Francisco termina hoy su ciclo de catequesis sobre la oración cristiana durante la audiencia general en el patio de San Dámaso y exhorta a tener el valor y la esperanza de sentir la presencia de Cristo en nosotros: que nuestra vida sea "para dar gloria a Dios".

Después de varios meses en los que el Pontífice ha reflexionado sobre la oración cristiana, Francisco recuerda hoy, en su última catequesis sobre este tema, cómo la oración es una de las características más evidentes de la vida de Jesús: "Jesús rezaba y rezaba tanto - ha dicho el Papa - y durante su misión, Jesús se sumerge en ella, porque el diálogo con el Padre es el núcleo incandescente de toda su existencia".

De hecho - continúa el Papa - "los Evangelios testimonian cómo la oración de Jesús se hizo todavía más intensa y frecuente en la hora de su pasión y muerte", asegurando que estos sucesos culminantes constituyen el núcleo central de la predicación cristiana, el *kerygma*: "esas últimas horas vividas por Jesús en Jerusalén son el corazón del Evangelio no solo porque a esta narración los evangelistas reservan, en proporción, un espacio mayor, sino también porque el evento de la muerte y resurrección arroja luz sobre todo el resto de la historia de Jesús".

Jesús no ofrece salvación episódica, sino la salvación total. Francisco después ha explicado que Jesús no fue "un filántropo" que se hizo cargo de los sufrimientos y de las enfermedades humanas: "fue y es mucho más" dice el Papa. "En Él no hay solamente bondad: hay algo más, está la salvación, y no una salvación episódica - la que me salva de una enfermedad o de un momento de desánimo - sino la salvación total".

La oración de Jesús es intensa, constante y única.

Después, el Papa enumera una serie de acontecimientos en los que vemos a Jesús rezando: "Son las horas decisivas de la pasión y de la muerte, en las que vemos una oración intensa, única y que se convierte en el modelo de nuestra oración" asegura el Papa.

"Él reza de forma dramática en el huerto del Getsemaní, asaltado por una angustia mortal. Reza también en la cruz, envuelto en tinieblas por el silencio de Dios. Es la oración más audaz, porque en la cruz Jesús es el intercesor absoluto: reza por los otros, por todos, también por aquellos que lo condenan, sin que nadie, excepto un pobre malhechor, se ponga de su lado. Todos estaban en contra de Él o eran indiferentes. Sólo ese malhechor reconoció el poder. En medio del drama, en el dolor atroz del alma y del cuerpo, Jesús reza con las palabras de los salmos; con los pobres del mundo, especialmente con los olvidados por todos. Sintió el abandono; y rezó".

Al final, en la cruz "se cumple el don del Padre - dice el Papa - que ofrece el amor, es decir, se cumple nuestra salvación".

Jesús nunca nos abandona, siempre reza por nosotros.

Al final de su reflexión, Francisco recuerda que incluso en el más doloroso de nuestros sufrimientos, "nunca estamos solos" y "la oración de Jesús está con nosotros para que su palabra nos ayude a avanzar".

"Recordad - dice el Papa - la gracia de que nosotros no solamente rezamos, sino que, por así decir, hemos sido "rezados", ya somos acogidos en el diálogo de Jesús con el Padre, en la comunión del Espíritu Santo". Y no olvidemos - prosigue - que "Jesús reza por mí, incluso en los peores momentos".

La exhortación final del Pontífice es a "tener coraje y esperanza para sentir fuertemente la oración de Jesús y seguir adelante: que nuestra vida sea un dar gloria a Dios sabiendo que Él reza por mí".

-Mireia Bonilla - Ciudad del Vaticano

La Parroquia de San Antonio Nuestra Misión:

Nosotros, la comunidad de San Antonio, bendecidos con diversidad en cultura y tradiciones, nos unimos a la presencia real de Jesús en la Sagrada Eucaristía. Nos comprometemos a vivir y enseñar la palabra de nuestro señor Jesucristo por medio de nuestra oración, servicio y acciones.

Oración por La Paz del Papa Francisco

Señor, Dios de paz, escucha nuestra súplica.

Hemos intentado muchas veces y durante muchos años resolver nuestros conflictos con nuestras fuerzas, y también con nuestras armas; tantos momentos de hostilidad y de oscuridad; tanta sangre derramada; tantas vidas destruidas; tantas esperanzas abatidas... Pero nuestros esfuerzos han sido en vano. Ahora, Señor, ayúdanos tú. Danos tú la paz, enséñanos tú la paz, guíanos tú hacia la paz. Abre nuestros ojos y nuestros corazones, y danos la valentía para decir: «¡Nunca más la guerra!»; «con la guerra, todo queda destruido». Infúndenos el valor de llevar a cabo gestos concretos para construir la paz.

Señor, Dios de Abraham y los Profetas, Dios amor que nos has creado y nos llamas a vivir como hermanos, danos la fuerza para ser cada día artesanos de la paz; danos la capacidad de mirar con benevolencia a todos los hermanos que encontramos en nuestro camino. Haznos disponibles para escuchar el clamor de nuestros ciudadanos que nos piden transformar nuestras armas en instrumentos de paz, nuestros temores en confianza y nuestras tensiones en perdón.

Mantén encendida en nosotros la llama de la esperanza para tomar con paciente perseverancia opciones de diálogo y reconciliación, para que finalmente triunfe la paz. Y que sean desterradas del corazón de todo hombre estas palabras: división, odio, guerra. Señor, desarma la lengua y las manos, renueva los corazones y las mentes, para que la palabra que nos lleva al encuentro sea siempre «hermano», y el estilo de nuestra vida se convierta en shalom, paz, salam.

Amén.

- Papa Francisco, *Invocación por la paz*, 8 de junio de 2014
Usado con permiso. © LIBRERIA EDITRICE VATICANA

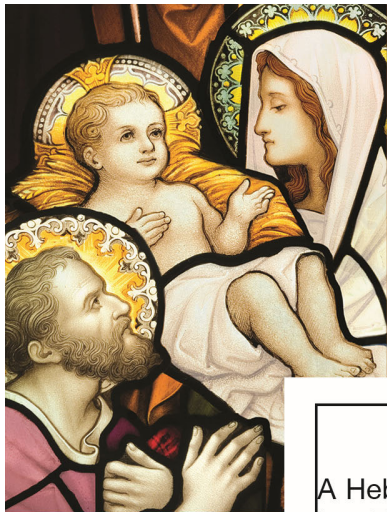
Nota para Todos los Feligreses

Nuestras oficinas de la parroquia estarán cerradas el Lunes, Enero 2 en honor al Nuevo Año. Estaremos abriendo el día Martes, Enero 3, 2023.



Exposición del Santísimo Sacramento

Primer Viernes - El 6 de Enero es el primer Viernes del mes y tendremos Misa regular a las 8 de la mañana. La Exposición del Santísimo Sacramento comenzará a las 8:30 de la mañana y continuará hasta 12pm del mediodía. Si usted quisiera acompañar una hora al Santísimo Sacramento, por favor comuníquese con Elizabeth Swenson al (310)322-4392.



The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found

MARY AND JOSEPH, AND THE INFANT LYING IN THE MANGER.

Luke 2:16

January 1, 2023 • Mary, the Holy Mother of God

SHALOM

A Hebrew word that many people are familiar with is *shalom*, commonly translated into English as “peace.” However, the word is much richer, deeper, and broader than that. As a matter of fact, when the blessing in today’s first reading concludes with *shalom*, it serves as a summary of the entire blessing: *shalom* is God’s wholeness, well-being, longevity, harmony, as well as God’s peace. Perhaps Mary prayed this blessing while she found herself in the midst of angels, shepherds, and—quite likely, thanks to the shepherds—inquisitive neighbors who had been told of the wondrous birth. Perhaps she prayed for God’s *shalom* not only for herself, but also for her child as she reflected on his birth. As we stand at the threshold of a new year, we can likewise pray this blessing, with Mary as our example, pondering the mysteries of Christ in our hearts, praying for the richness, depth, and breadth of God’s *shalom*.

MARY THE CAREGIVER

At some point in time, most people will find themselves needing to watch over another person. This is true for parents and children of course; for others, perhaps an aging parent or spouse; a friend or neighbor living alone after surgery. At these times, along with the caregiving of the moment, there is often a focus on the future, a wondering about what will come. Quite naturally for the new mother Mary there is this future focus, with many possibilities for her to hold in her heart. She reflects quietly in the midst of the very hectic series of events that follow the birth of her child: hurrying shepherds who go and tell the wondrous news to others, then those others sharing their amazement. Luke tells us that Mary keeps all of this, and reflects on it in her heart. Mary is watching over Jesus as mothers do, watching over each and every moment.

GOD THE CAREGIVER

As Mary watches over her child, so did Israel pray for God to watch over them and one another, to bless and keep them, as Mary kept and reflected on things in her heart. Mary’s face surely shone upon the infant Jesus, as Israel prayed for God’s face to shine upon them with that graciousness we also know in her whom we call “full of grace.” At the conclusion of the blessing in today’s first reading is a prayer for God to look on us in kindness and, even more, to grant us peace. It may be in this final line of the blessing that we see God most at work in the face and the care of Mary, gazing gently on her child, wishing the fullness of God’s *shalom* for Jesus and his future. Our mission as disciples is to show the divine care we hear in the blessing prayer, and to live out the care-giving we see today in Mary.

TODAY’S READINGS

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