

## *Our Lady of Lourdes*

The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God  
January 1, 2010

Readings:

Numbers 6:22-28

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:16-21

Fr. Bob

Liturgically, the Octave of Christmas commemorates: the Solemnity of the Mother of God. It is also the day designated for prayers for global peace, as well as the beginning of the New Year. It's a feast day, with many different layers of meaning. Though the shepherds gain insight into the presence of God by seeing this holy family. And from accounts, they are the first ones to see and to understand what the birth is all about. A question for us on this day of many different meanings, if we understand or appreciate, truly, what this coming of Christ means.

We know the story of Christ, from the beginning to the end. We could probably tell most of it from memory to anyone who asked. But the birth was meant to change the world. And not just for one generation, but for all generations. Has the presence of Christ in this world, really captured our hearts. And it's not mentioned much, but does the presence of Christ touch our imagination and allow us to dream of things being different for ourselves, both now and in the future. We are also told that it is Mary who holds all these things in her heart. She is the one who ponders the significance of these mysterious events. Mary becomes for Christians an inspiration of contemplation and reflection.

And it gives us a question today. What are the things that we hold in our hearts during this holy season as the story of Christ, once again begins to unfold. I'm sure her thoughts were not about resentments, or the petty things that most of us worry about. And mostly, the petty things occupy our minds. Probably what was in her heart is what should inspire us to consider deeply the significance of events, lest we go blandly through life without meaning or direction. She inspires us to fidelity to the practices of our faith, practices which are the disciplines of soul that lead the community to a clearer focus on God's presence in human affairs.

The theme of peace appears today on many levels. Its meaning, "fullness of life," bursts forth in every one of the readings. The ancient prayer or blessing of peace is an appropriate start for the New Year. It resonates well with the angels' wish for people of good will. Peace is also our inheritance in Christ. As adopted children of God, we have been given the freedom to live in a godly manner, calling God our Abba. Right relationships in the covenant activity of God are the pathways of peace. The beginning of a New Year is a good time to reach out to others and to pray for God's blessing of peace for each dimension of human encounter. This is a time to pray for peace. Between people we have hurt, whether directly or through things like gossip and attack on character. It's a time to pray for peace in our church, our larger community, and we cannot escape turning our minds to pray for peace in our world.

This is a feast with many dimensions to challenge us. But all the different images, and thoughts within ourselves are directed to one thing and one question alone. Within our hearts, are we filled with things that keep us away from the presence of God, such as anger and resentments, or are our hearts filled with wonder, hope and with imagination as to what our small worlds and the entire world could be if only we understood what it means to say that Christ is present, yesterday, today and tomorrow.