

Reflection Questions

- In what ways have you recognized that 'the Lord is with you' along your recovery from addiction and unhealthy attachments?
- How have you responded to God's invitation to bring the hope of new life to others?
- Is there something you have been reflecting on which requires action in the new year?

Today's Mass Readings

1st Reading: Numbers 6:22-27

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

2nd Reading: Galatians 4:4-7

Gospel: Luke 2:16-21

Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary



We rejoice together in the coming of our Lord at Christmas and the hope of a new year ahead of us. In addition, today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Her grace and intercession can lead to powerful transformation and protection from temptation.

In the readings leading up to Christmas, we were given a chance to reflect upon Mary's willingness and humility—two important components of recovery. Mary's "yes" paved the way for Christ's entry into our world, revealing God's ultimate love for us and salvation from bondage. Prior to her invitation and call to take on such great responsibility, the angel Gabriel identifies the presence of God within her:

*"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."
But she was greatly troubled at what was said
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.
Then the angel said to her,
"Do not be afraid, Mary,
for you have found favor with God.*

*"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear
a son,
and you shall name him Jesus.
He will be great and will be called Son of the Most
High,
and the Lord God will give him the throne of David
his father,
and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,
and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

As most of us are when confronted with the magnificence of God's plan for us, Mary questions how this could possibly be true. Similar to what we find along the road of recovery, the angel promises that she will be supported by others along the way. In fact, her cousin, Elizabeth, has also experienced a miraculous spiritual experience, proving that nothing is impossible for God.

The Lord did not march into the world in a display of power and might, as many faithful Jews were expecting Him to. Rather, He was welcomed into the world by the grace of a humble woman:

*Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the
Lord.
May it be done to me according to your word."*

When faced with this amazing proposition, our Lord's Mother responds with the peace and serenity that comes with being protected by God. As we stay active in our recovery from addiction and unhealthy attachments, we will be faced with moments when God asks us to bring the hope of new life to others. This may not be convenient and we may not feel prepared, but He will provide us support and grace along the way.

Gathering in fellowship provides us a special opportunity to learn from the experience, strength, and hope of each other. The Virgin Mary found similar support from those that sent messages from God as she began her spiritual journey as the Mother of God. Let us each show the same willingness to reflect on the magnificence of the Lord as we hear from today's Gospel reading:

*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.*