

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Hail, Holy Mother, who gave birth to the King,
who rules heaven and earth for ever.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who through the fruitful virginity of Blessed Mary bestowed on the human race the grace of eternal salvation, grant, we pray that we may experience the intercession of her, through whom we were found worthy to receive the author of life, our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING

Nb 6:22-27

A reading from the book of Numbers.

The Lord spoke to Moses and said, "Say this to Aaron and his sons: 'This is how you are to bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them:
May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the Lord let his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
May the Lord uncover his face to you and bring you peace.'
This is how they are to call down my name on the sons of Israel, and I will bless them.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

RESP. PSALM

Ps 66

Response:

O God, be gracious and bless us.

1. God, be gracious and bless us
and let your face shed its light upon us.
So will your ways be known upon earth
and all nations learn your saving help.
(R.)
2. Let the nations be glad and exult
for you rule the world with justice.
With fairness you rule the peoples,
you guide the nations on earth. (R.)

3. Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
May God still give us his blessing
till the ends of the earth revere him. (R.)

SECOND READING

Gal 4:4-7

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Galatians.

When the appointed time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law and to enable us to be adopted as sons. The proof that you are sons is that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts: the Spirit that cries, "Abba, Father", and it is this that makes you a son, you are not a slave any more; and if God has made you son, then he has made you heir.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
At various times in the past
and in various different ways,
God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets;
but in our own time, the last days,
he has spoken to us through his Son.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Lk 2:16-21

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.

The shepherds hurried away to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds had to say. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; it was exactly as they had been told. When the eighth day came and the child was to be circumcised, they gave him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before his conception.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O God, who in your kindness begin all good things
and bring them to fulfilment,
grant to us, who find joy in the Solemnity of the holy Mother of God,
that, just as we glory in the beginnings of your grace,
so one day we may rejoice in its completion.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today,
and for ever.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We have received this heavenly Sacrament with joy, O Lord:
grant, we pray,
that it may lead us to eternal life,
for we rejoice to proclaim the blessed ever-Virgin Mary
Mother of your Son and Mother of the Church.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

A NEW YEAR!

LUKE 2:16-21

The first words we hear from the Bible in this New Year are words of blessing in the first reading (Num 6:22-27)

In fact, the first action of God towards human beings after their creation is to bless them. This blessing involves first of all being fruitful, that children and family life are, in God's sight, a blessing. The next result of this blessing is that God gives human beings the care of the earth, the stewardship of creation. Being made in the image and likeness of God, human beings should treat the natural world with care and respect and so reflect the Creator.

Most people think of the opening chapters of the Bible as presenting the original state of the world: an ideal, peaceful situation which was somehow ruined, Paradise Lost. But perhaps there is another way of looking at the stories of creation, that they are putting before us a vision of how the world ought to be and our responsibility as human beings to bring that about.

Saint Paul's vision of what Christ has achieved in God's plan includes not only human beings but the entire universe. It is a sweeping, cosmic view which teaches that all God's creation has been redeemed, and will be brought to that very good state that Genesis declares it to be.

At the New Year, most people make their New Year Resolutions. Most of us are only too well aware of how long these last. Maybe a better way would be to make our resolutions one day at a time, just for today. We might ask for the grace to see how our presence to other people and what we do could be a blessing to them. We might think about how we can be in some way the image and likeness of the God we say we believe in. New Year resolutions are one way in which we admit to ourselves that there are aspects of our lives which we would like to improve: if the God we believe in is benevolent and peaceful, then we should be trying to bring about a world where these attitudes are not a dream but a reality. It is a demanding vision, but one which Jesus came to bring about. ■

SAY

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for me.

DO

Consider your New Year resolutions. What is it in your life that you really want to improve? Does an indefinite period seem rather daunting? Would making a renewed resolution and effort each day make more sense?

REFLECT

Many of the disasters we witness on our news programmes are the result of human beings exploiting the natural world and each other. The underlying message of the bible about the environment and natural resources is that they are there for human use, but should be respected and cared for. The problems of our world do seem to be overwhelming and there are no simple answers to such complex questions, but the greatest danger is that people lose hope and adopt an attitude of What's the use? So, we might decide today that whatever we do in our own lives will contribute to the total amount of good in our immediate surroundings and in that way we will be adding to the peace and goodness in the world. In that way we will become a blessing and reflect more the image and likeness of the God we say we believe in. ■

LEARN

It is easier to make resolutions day by day: a period of twenty-four hours is manageable, and each day is a new start.

Blessing in the bible is connected with fertility in human beings, animals and crops.

Material prosperity is seen by some as a sign of God's favour and approval. For people holding this view, misfortune suggests something amiss in the person's relationship with God.

Wisdom writing in the bible considers human life in all its aspects: the Garden of Eden story first presents a vision of how the world ought to be, then how it actually is.