

## Mary, Mother of God + 1 January 2025 + Num 6:22-27 + Gal 4:4-7 + Lk 2:16-21

Hopefully all of us have been able to enjoy some time with family over the last few weeks. For myself, I find that I appreciate these times more and more the older I get. Because the older we get, the more we also feel the absence of those loved ones who are no longer with us. In fact, sometimes on my drive home from family gatherings, I find myself reflecting, "I wish I would have looked at my family members a little more." Now that might sound a little odd, so here's what I mean:

How often, when we are with those whom we love, do we actually *look at* them? If we are in the car, we have to look at the road. If we are at home, we might be looking at the TV watching a football game, or worse, looking at our phones. I'd wager to guess that we actually spend a lot less time looking at each other than we might expect.

Now when I say 'look at,' I don't mean stare at blankly. It's more like what Scripture means when it says "to behold." It's the way that the shepherds and the Blessed Mother would have beheld the infant Jesus in our Gospel today. It's taking a mental snapshot, so as to (hopefully) not forget, and to carry the person in your heart when they are no longer physically present.

In the last 20 years or so, there has been a revitalized interest in the Church, in our country at least, in Eucharistic adoration. We (will have/had) adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (tomorrow/this afternoon). And I think a lot of this renewed appreciation comes from this need within us to behold those whom we love. Because coming to Mass to receive Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is an incredible gift, but it is also the bare minimum. We also need to slow down and just be silent, to behold, adore, appreciate, and just *be with* Jesus, each day. Adoration helps us to do just that.

As we celebrate Mary under the banner of "Mother of God" today, we are reminded of how she did not let the wonderful moments of the birth of her son pass her by unreflectively. Rather, *she kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.* And the very fact that we can read the infancy narratives in the Gospels is proof of this reflection: she must have been the source of Matthew and Luke's accounts. Her prayerful reflection in the moment continues to bless us even to this day.

And so as we begin a new year on the calendar, one good resolution would be to not let this year pass us by unawares. Specifically, to put down the phone, to behold each other, and to appreciate each moment, for we never know how long we will have. But also, to make sure we behold the Lord; when we receive Holy Communion, and all throughout our days, and realize that He always *looks kindly upon* us, lets His *face shine upon* us, and *blesses us with His peace.*