

**COMMENTARY ON READINGS FOR SUNDAY, JAN. 1, 2006**  
**(Octave of Christmas; Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God)**  
**(Num 6:22-27; Ps 67; Gal 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21)**

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We begin this new year with a solemn feast in honor of our heavenly Mother, Mary. Although in English we say “Sunday,” echoing our pagan (idolatrous) past — Spanish, at least, calls it *domingo*, the “Lord’s Day”— it is really the first day of the week. This is the day of creation, Gen 1:1-5, and the day of re-creation after the Flood whose waters destroyed all evil on the earth (these waters dried up on a New Year’s Day, Gen 8:13). And it was on a New Year’s Day that God came down to dwell with his people Israel, when the Tabernacle was built, Exod 40:1, 16. It is interesting to note that Luke 1:35 uses the same verb (“overshadow”) for Mary’s conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit that the Greek version (the Septuagint) uses in Exod 40:35 for the filling of the Tabernacle (the divine Presence) by the Glory of God. Mary is the real Tabernacle of God among us, Jesus. Jesus inaugurated the New Creation (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17; Rev 21:5) by his resurrection on the first day of the week (Mark 16:2; John 20:19-22).

Thus it is very appropriate for us on this day to receive the priestly blessing (in the first reading), as prayed for in the psalm. The reading from Galatians is dense: the “fullness of time” is the whole waiting period of Israel brought to completion with Christ (see e.g. Dan 9; Mark 1:15). God’s Son Jesus is born of Mary, and in Jesus (and through Mary), we also becoming adoptive children of God, receiving the Holy Spirit as proof. The waiting period, akin to exile, slavery and imprisonment (Gal 3:23-26), is over.

The Gospel has Mary ‘pondering all these things (mysteries, worthy of contemplation) in her heart’. This expression, along with Luke 2:51, is very similar to the Greek text of Dan 7:28, where the prophet has to ponder and treasure in his heart his vision of the Son of man and of the Kingdom that is coming.