

Homily

Solemnity of Mary – A

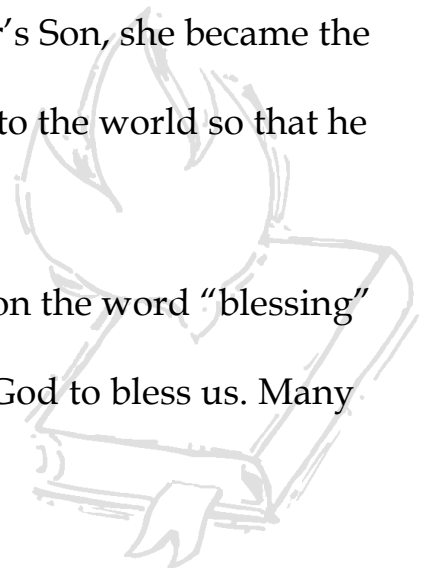
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
January 01, 2026

Nm 6: 22-27
Ps 67: 2-3, 5, 6, 8
Gal 4: 4-7
Lk 2: 16-21

*Christmas is coming.
The goose is getting fat.
Please put a penny in the old man's hat.
If you have not got a penny, a hay penny will do.
If you have not got a hay penny, then God bless you!*

God bless you on this eighth day of the Christmas octave for this Bonus Mass on the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. As we start our new secular year, it is very appropriate for us to remind ourselves of the sacrifice and the love and the blessings that were bestowed on this special, holy woman full of grace and without sin because the Lord was with her. Because of our Blessed Mother allowing the Spirit to fill her womb with the presence of the Heavenly Father's Son, she became the first tabernacle of the church, bringing Christ into the world so that he could offer us a chance for salvation.

Concerning today's homily, I was reflecting on the word "blessing" because a good number of times in life, we ask God to bless us. Many



times in life, we bless others. We bless God. We say, "God, bless you."
We say, "Bless us, Lord, and these thy gifts which we are about to receive." We have a lot of blessings that we offer in life, for those that are given to us and those we give to others. How are we able to do that? How are we able to bless God? How is that even possible?

The answer to this question might be answered with our gospel reading today. Us being able to bless was made possible perhaps as we commemorate this particular day where Blessed Mother Mary received this gift of God in her womb. "I am the handmade of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to thy word" (Lk 1: 38). Because this "God-bearer" (Theotokos) allowed God to enter her heart, her life in this special way, Mother Mary truly was blessed.

I keep focusing on this quote on this feast day because the day we were conceived, the moment when we were baptized, every single one of us, the presence of God within us in the person of the Holy Spirit. When we are confirmed, the Holy Spirit becomes "sealed" within us, personally acknowledging that God exists in every single one of us in this specific way.



What we decide to do
with God within us is
completely up to us. We
can choose to abandon
the Spirit; we can choose

to put a bushel basket over it. We also have the free will to allow that Spirit, that light, to shine. At our Easter Vigil Liturgy, we start the night in darkness with all these wonderful people are holding these candles, symbolizing the light penetrating the darkness. I was thinking about our pilgrimage to St. Joseph's Church in Bradley last September when all of our pilgrims were processing to the church with lit candles (e now have these candles that are run by battery so they do not get extinguished by the wind). All these lights that penetrate the darkness symbolizes God's light metaphorically shining in the night.

Now that the Advent Season has passed and we now are at the end of our Christmas Octave, we commemorate how God was present within the Blessed Mother and how, in a different way, God is present within us. As long as we allow that light to shine within us, that

presence of the Holy Spirit, then we understand that we can bless God and we can bless others because *God is within us offering the blessing through us.*

When I was ordained on June 1, 1996, my hands were consecrated to become God's hands. These hands now belong to Christ so that the Holy Spirit can work through me and God can work through me to change the gifts of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ; the Holy Spirit also exists (in a different way) within our parents and in our children and in our parishioners who choose to allow this light to shine.

Today is a holy day in the Church, a day of obligation for the faithful, as long as it does not fall on a Saturday or a Monday. This last day of the Christmas Octave is so important that we set it aside and remind ourselves to attend Mass and to remember how that light was given to the Blessed Mother. how she was protected from original sin, how she committed herself and sacrificed herself to allow God to work through her so God could come to us.

If you look at our readings today, we can see how that grace, that light, that love is being passed on from generation to generation. As

Paul says, as long as we have that light, we are no longer enemies; we are no longer slaves. We are brothers and sisters and we are supposed to act as such. If we have that light, then we understand why we come to worship together in church. If we have that light, we understand how we are to treat each other, not with disdain, not with discrimination, not with marginalization, not to put people down, but to build people up, to tell people that they have value, that they are important, that their story needs to be heard because God is with them.

If we are doing this right, then we pray together so that we can allow God to shine within us so we can share this presence of God together. *That* is why we are here today and we are very blessed that you join us on the last day of the Christmas Octave, on this day of obligation to start the New Year, but most importantly on this eighth day of Christmas to complete this octave and remind ourselves what God was willing to do for us so that light could exist within us.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. That light shined within her and that light shines within us, a light that shines within all of us,

each one of us. We are very blessed that that light is here. Let the light shine. Let the grace be given to us so that we can embrace this presence of God, that we can share with each other. Let us share and pass on this blessing of God from within our hearts to the people that we meet. God bless you and have a blessed New Year. This is our prayer.