



# WELCOME TO HOLY FAMILY PARISH

1451 Strachan Road SE, Medicine Hat, Alberta T1B 4V3

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Office Hours: Monday to Friday - 8:30 am to 4:30 pm  
(closed Statutory Holidays)

Calgary Diocesan website: [www.rcdiocese-calgary.ab.ca](http://www.rcdiocese-calgary.ab.ca)

**Pastor** - Rev. Philip Le  
email: [frphilip@holyfamilymh.ca](mailto:frphilip@holyfamilymh.ca)  
**Associate Pastor** - Rev. Roque Pereira  
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**Deacon** - Rev. Mr. Robert Risling  
**Deacon** - Rev. Mr. Bill Schnitzler  
**Pastoral Care of the Sick**  
pager: 403-458-1445  
**NET Team email:**  
[medhatcatholicyouth@gmail.com](mailto:medhatcatholicyouth@gmail.com)

**Mass Times**  
Saturday - 5:00 pm  
Sunday - 8:30 am, 10:30 am and 6:00 pm  
Reconciliation: Saturday 3:00 - 4:00 pm  
or by appointment  
**Weekday Mass Schedule on Page 2**

## THANK YOU

**Thank you to all ministries and volunteers** who prepared the church or served at the Christmas and Solemnity of Mary Masses - Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, Altar Servers, Lectors, Choir Members (children and adults), Leaders of Song, Musicians, Hospitality, Powerpoint and Soundboard, Art and Environment, Ushers, Counting Teams, Cleaning Crew and the fellow who put the missalettes in the pews for the Christmas Masses. Your donations of time and talent are greatly appreciated. We received many comments from visitors who were amazed at the number of people involved in the celebrations and how everyone worked together to make the liturgy special.

**Thank you from Fr. Philip, Fr. Roque, Dcn. Robert and Dcn. Bill** for the many cards, gifts, prayers and good wishes we received. May you be blessed in the New Year with good health and joy in the Lord.

**WELCOME!** *You have entered this church not as a stranger, but as a guest of God. Being a human, you enter this church as a creature of God; as a baptized person, you enter it as a son or daughter of the Father in Christ. This house of God is therefore your family home. Come in then with humility of mind, joy of heart and thanks on your lips. Acknowledge the Lord's presence in the Tabernacle and adore Him. Come in and pause in prayer in the midst of your busy life and its many worries. Be grateful for those who, for the Glory of God, built this place of worship with faith and sacrifice, and sanctified it with their songs and prayers.*

*Anyone who wishes to practice the Catholic faith by attending this church may consider this parish as his/her own parish. You simply need to register. Please indicate whether you are a new parishioner or have moved and are providing a new address. Thank you.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Spouse \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

## PRAYERS FOR THE SICK & SUFFERING

*We are celebrating a New Year and starting a new Prayer List for the Sick and Suffering. You will notice that there is no list in the bulletin today or on the bulletin board this week.*

- If you would like to have someone included on the prayer list, please call the parish office.*
- Please ask permission from the individual or family to have the name included on the list.*
- Also, if the individual's circumstances should change, please make it your responsibility to call the parish office (403-527-6933) to update the list. Thank you.*

### PARISH SCHEDULE OF EVENTS & MASS INTENTIONS

The daily Mass may be cancelled in case of a funeral.

Friday Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will be interrupted or cancelled if there is a funeral.

- Sun. Jan. 1 - Children's Liturgy will resume January 15  
First Communion and Confirmation catechism classes resume January 15  
UNCHAINED Youth Group for students in grades 10 to 12 resumes January 15  
**Latin Mass - St. Patrick's Church - 6:00 pm**
- Mon. Jan. 2 - **St. Basil & St. Gregory: Mass - 9:00 am** (Intention for Sophia Seeley & Family)  
Parish Office closed  
Knights of Columbus Council #9502 executive meeting - Faith Room - 7:00 pm  
Circle of Friends Charismatic Prayer Group - St. Joseph's Home - 7:00 pm
- Tues. Jan. 3 - St. Vincent de Paul meeting - Hope Room - 5:00 pm  
**Mass - 7:00 pm** (Intention for Philip Hauck +)  
**Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament after Mass until 8:30 pm**  
C.W.L. executive meeting - Hope Room - after 7:00 pm Mass
- Wed. Jan. 4 - Women's Praise and Worship resumes January 11  
**Mass - 9:00 am** (Intention for Earl Chisholm +)  
Bible Study - Faith Room - 9:30 am  
Ministry to the Aged at Sunnyside Care Centre - 1:30 pm  
**Mass at Good Samaritan - 3:30 pm**  
R.C.I.A. meetings resume January 11  
Choir practice (for 6:00 pm Mass) resumes January 11
- Thurs. Jan. 5 - Men's Prayer Group - Charity Room - 6:30 am  
**Mass - 9:00 am** (Intention for "Special Intention")  
Ministry to the Aged at the Wellington - 9:30 am  
**Mass at the Valleyview - 10:00 am**  
**Holy Hour - Chapel - 6:00 pm**  
Choir practice (for 8:30 am & 10:30 am Masses) resumes January 12
- Fri. Jan. 6 - **First Friday: Mass - 9:00 am** (Intention for Frances & John Hunder +)  
**Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Chapel after 9:00 am Mass until 4:00 pm**  
Ministry to the Aged at Meadowlands - 10:00 am  
EQUIP Youth Group for students in grades 6 to 9 resumes January 13  
Spanish Catholic Community meeting - Faith Room - 7:30 pm
- Sat. Jan. 7 - Benedictine Lay Group - 9:00 am (Please call 528-8999 or 527-7423 for location.)  
**Epiphany of the Lord: Mass - 5:00 pm** (Intention for Ann & Ralph Immel)
- Sun. Jan. 8- **Epiphany of the Lord: Mass - 8:30 am** (Intention for Jack Guckert +)  
**Epiphany of the Lord: Mass - 10:30 am** (Intention for Holy Family Parish)  
First Communion and Confirmation catechism classes resume January 15  
**Epiphany of the Lord: Mass - 6:00 pm** (Intention for Richard L'Heureux +)
- Sun. Jan. 15 - Parish Breakfast - Parish Hall - after 8:30 am and 10:30 am Masses  
**March 3 to 7 - Parish Lenten Mission with Bishop Frederick Henry**

## YOUTH MINISTRY WITH THE NET TEAM

Our NET team has returned to their hometowns to spend Christmas with their families. When they return in January, the activities will resume.

***Unchained (students grades 10 to 12):***

Sunday, January 15 - Movie Night  
 Sunday, January 22 - The Eucharist  
 Sunday, January 29 - The Media

Join us for 6:00 pm Mass and then go into the hall.

***Equip (students in grades 6 to 9):***

Friday, January 13 at St. Patrick's - 7:00 pm  
 Friday, January 20 at Holy Family - 7:00 pm  
 Friday, January 27 at St. Patrick's - 7:00 pm

**REDISCOVERING CATHOLICISM** sessions (5 in total) offered by Fr. Philip and the Pastoral Team will begin on **Thursday, February 16** from 7:00 - 9:00 pm in the parish hall. This is a great way to learn about the faith of the Catholic Church in a relaxed and fun atmosphere. The theme for next session will be **"Jesus in the Bible"**. We will look at (1) Jesus, the Prophet, (2) Jesus, the Teacher of the Parables, (3) Jesus, the Healer of the Body and Soul, (4) Jesus, the Mercy of God and (5) Jesus, the Ministry.

**IDEAS, IDEAS, IDEAS WELCOME!** Do you have an idea to help the parish grow? The Parish Pastoral Council would like to hear your ideas. Spiritual, charitable, social, etc. - please send your suggestions to [holyfamilyideas@telus.net](mailto:holyfamilyideas@telus.net).

**SOLD OUT!** The supper and show on Friday, April 13, 2012 featuring the Great Canadian Barn Dance Band (the Kunkel Family) is sold out. Thank you for your support of this parish event.

*"The family that prays together - stays together."*

**SENIOR'S TEA** will be held on the parish hall on **Friday, January 13** at 2:00 pm. All senior's are welcome to come and enjoy friendship and light refreshments.

**HOSPITAL:** If you or someone in your family is admitted to the hospital, please contact the parish office and give us the name and room number. The Parish Pastoral Team will visit the patient and take communion to them. We can not minister to you, if we do not know you are in the hospital. Thank you.

## NET and HOST FAMILIES

The NET Team has been in our community for 3 months now and we thank ALL the host families who in faith opened their doors to welcome these 8 mature young adults. As you know, the Team is now home for Christmas and will be returning to Medicine Hat on January 8. Currently, we are looking for host families or host couples for **January 8 - 19** (2 girls), **February 16 - March 1** (2 girls) and **February 16 - March 1** (3 boys). For information, please contact Dianna (403-527-4338) or email [hdfrey@shaw.ca](mailto:hdfrey@shaw.ca).

**"CRAZY POTLUCK COMMITTEE?"**: One of the ideas for family gatherings in the parish is the "Crazy Potluck Committee". Basically the potluck luncheon or supper would include another activity - Best Blueberry Pie Contest, Best Chili Contest, Hot Dog Eating Contest for possible examples. Would you like to be part of this new and fun committee? For more information, please contact Gaston at 403-866-8724 or email [hfpotluckclub@telus.net](mailto:hfpotluckclub@telus.net).

**CATHOLICS COMING HOME** begins **Tuesday, February 14** (and then 5 more Tuesdays) at 7:00 pm in the Hope Room. Confused Catholic? Inactive Catholic? Alienated Catholic? If you are away from the Church or drifting away, if you were hurt by the Church or angry because of your Catholic experience, please consider this an invitation to come and talk.

**RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults)** is for adults wishing to prepare to be baptized or received as full members of the Roman Catholic Church. Please call the parish office for more information.

## OPERATING FINANCES

### **Last week (December 18 - 25, 2011)**

Cost to operate our church	
(Budget 2011 & Mortgage Amount):	\$18,970
Collections:	\$25,115
Debt Reduction (Mortgage Fund):	\$48,816
Debt Reduction contributions	
<b>for December:</b>	\$89,950
Monthly mortgage payment:	\$21,843

### **Together in Action (TIA) 2011 Campaign**

TIA Collections thus far:	\$58,835.42
TIA Goal for our parish:	\$64,024

*Thank you for your support!*



## KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

**2012 Memberships** for Knights of Columbus may be paid by putting the fee in a plain envelope (clearly marked with your name and K. of C. council number) and drop it in the collection basket.

**Knights of Columbus Council #9502:** If a member of the council is hospitalized, and would like to be visited by a Brother Knight, please call the parish office (403-527-6933) and leave the name and room number. Thank you.

**Knights of Columbus Council #9502** executive meeting on Monday, January 2 at 7:00 pm in the Faith Room. The regular meeting will be held on **Monday, January 9** at 7:00 pm in the Faith Room.

**Knights of Columbus Council #7325** regular meeting will be held on **Thursday, January 12** in the Faith Room at 7:30 pm.



## CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE

**CWL Memberships for 2012 are now due.** To help our council, please put \$25.00 in an envelope, clearly mark your name and "CWL Membership" on the envelope and drop in the collection basket. Thank you for your cooperation.

**2012 CATHOLIC CONFERENCE:** *Open Wide the Doors - Welcome the New Evangelization* will be held **March 9 - 10, 2012** in Calgary. This conference brings together speakers from across the province exploring topics ranging from marriage, faith and culture to pastoral and palliative care and inter-church relationships. The keynote speakers at this year's conference are Archbishop Gerard Pettipas and Steve Angrisano. For more information or to register, please visit the website [www.acsta.ab.ca](http://www.acsta.ab.ca) or see the poster on bulletin board.

**MASS INTENTIONS:** Please allow at least 4 to 5 months to request a special date for a Mass intention (anniversary of death, birthday, etc.). "*Because of the number of Masses requested in our parish, the priests give most of the Mass intentions with offering to other priests in the Diocese,*" - taken from the front of the Mass offering envelope.

**THANK YOU** to all **CWL and Knights of Columbus** members who have already paid their membership dues for 2012. A gentle reminder for those members who have not yet done so to renew your membership as soon as possible. Thank you.

**BAPTISM:** Parents are required to attend a Baptism preparation course and have a meeting with the Deacon before the Baptism of their child. Parents can attend the class before the birth of the child. Please contact the parish office (403-527-6933) and allow enough preparation time before you make plans for the Baptism. Thank you for your cooperation.

**BEQUESTS TO THE CHURCH:** The parish has been blessed to receive bequests from the estates of parishioners. We truly appreciate their thoughtfulness to include the church in their estate planning. The Holy Mass is offered for our patrons every last Saturday of the month. After prayerful consideration, you may wish to include the church in your estate planning.

**THANK YOU** to the kind individual who found the gold cross with the red stones and turned it into the parish office. The owner is very grateful.

**ST. VINCENT DE PAUL** wishes to thank the people of our parish for making it possible during the past year to meet some of the needs of our neighbours. The dedicated volunteers are ready to help those in need, but depend on your donations for the work to continue.

### **Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education CENTENNIAL HISTORY BOOK LAUNCH**

We regret to announce that the launch of the Centennial History Book has been postponed. Due to circumstances beyond our control, the printing of the book has been delayed. The launch will be re-scheduled in early 2012. The Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education wishes to thank you in advance for your patience.

### **CENTENNIAL BISHOP'S DINNER**

Tickets for the dinner on **June 9, 2012** are now on sale. Either purchase tickets individually or become a "Friend of the Centennial" and, as a sponsor, receive complimentary tickets. Proceeds to Youth Ministry and the Assisted Living Project for Priests.

### **SPONSORSHIP**

Sponsorship opportunities are available. Please contact Mr. Stan Aberle, Board Member and Centennial Committee Representative (403-878-7422).

### Fr. Philip's

One day, a friend of mine sent me his resolutions for the new year 2012: First, "**sleep late**;" second, "**take a walk in the shopping malls only**;" third, "**log more hours than ever in front of TV**;" fourth, "**double the time I take for hot baths**;" and fifth, "**eat bigger late night snacks whenever I want**." He called these "five resolutions I know I can keep." I replied: "Me too."

Traditionally on the New Year's Day, we make resolutions, a list of changes we'd like to make in our lives. On this feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, let me suggest some Mary-inspired resolutions.

First, we resolve to practice our Catholic faith. Mary provides us the example. As a faith-filled young Jewish mother, Mary brought her son Jesus to be circumcised when he was eight days old because God commanded that every male child shall be circumcised when he is eight days old. We find this command in Genesis (17:12). Mary and Joseph did as their faith taught them. As Catholics we resolve to practice our faith as carefully as did Mary follow hers.

First and foremost, this means coming to Mass, the primary prayer of our Church. This year we renew our resolution as a Catholic to attend Mass each and every Sunday and each and every Holy Day of Obligation. Then we also pledge to practice all our Catholic ways. For example, young couples (and old couples too who should know better) in love should get married in the Church, with a nuptial Mass. People live in common law or cohabitation must know that is not the way of the Catholic life. Christ instituted the Sacrament of Marriage, and by our church wedding, we invite God to bless the newly married couple. The new husband and wife invite God to be a constant companion in their married life. As a good Jewish girl, Mary did as her faith taught her. Even sometimes she did not understand fully. We should do the same.

A second resolution is that we should form a habit of prayerful reflection. Our Gospel tells us, "Mary treasured all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." Mary pondered all that was happening to her. She reflected on a surprised visit by an angel, an even more surprising pregnancy, and the startling news that her son would be called the Son of God. Mary pondered as she and Joseph travelled to Bethlehem to have her baby born in a stable; then as she watched

the shepherds come saying they were told to look for a baby lying in a manger. For sure, Mary had a lot to think about. Mary rolled the events over and over in her mind, trying to plumb to the depths of their meaning.

We know how reflecting on Scriptures brings our faith to life. For example, recalling the story of Mary and a disciple of Jesus at the foot of the cross we see a suffering mother and a faithful follower witnessing Jesus' death. As we ponder this story in our heart, we see a deeper lesson: that Jesus not only cares for his mother, but also entrusts his disciple and us to the care of Mary. Our second resolution brings us to ponder what happens to us, both the everyday events of life and the great moments of life. We think over these events in our hearts in light of lessons from the Bible and from practicing our beautiful Catholic faith.

A third resolution is to trust God completely. Mary trusted God when the angel told her to name her Son Jesus. Mary trusted God as she tried to explain to family and friends her unexpected pregnancy. Remember, Joseph almost divorced her. We need to trust God who can bring the best out of the bad. I tell you one of my experiences. When the communist regime (who hates Catholic Church) took over the country, many people had to flee their homeland and thought that the Church in Vietnam would be extinguished soon. But 35 years later, the Church over there has ever been growing fast and strong not only in the country, but overseas also. In Canada alone, there are more than a hundred Vietnamese priests and a Bishop!

An example on the lighter side, St. Therese of Lisieux wrote about an annoying nun sitting behind her in the chapel. That nun always made curious little noises. Those tiny noises got to Therese. How could she react? In prayer, Therese turned those annoying noises into what she called "delightful music." With full trust in God, St. Therese began to see the suffering Christ in the sister sitting behind her. The annoying nun became an image of God. Our third resolution is to trust God who brings out the best, even when the awful things happen to us. Way back in the fifth century, the Council of Ephesus (431 A. D.) declared Mary to be "Theotokos," a Greek word, "Theotokos" translates as "God Bearer." More commonly, we call Mary the Mother of God. Today we celebrate her feast with her life as an inspired example for many of our New Year's resolutions. **Happy New Year to you all!**

## Holy Family Parish - January 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> - Solemnity of Mary Mass 8:30, 10:30, 6:00 No 1st Communion or Confirmation classes Latin Mass - St. Pat's 6:00	<b>2</b> Mass 9:00 am Parish Office closed K of C 9502 exec. 7:00 Fr. Philip day off	<b>3</b> SVDP - 5:00 pm Mass 7:00 pm Adoration until 8:30 pm CWL exec. 7:45	<b>4</b> - Mass 9:00 am Women's P & W - 6:45 Bible Study 9:30 Good Samar. Mass 3:30 No Choir practice	<b>5</b> - Mass 9:00 am Men's Prayer 6:30 am Valleyview Mass 10:00 Holy Hour 6:00 pm No Choir practice	<b>6</b> - Mass 9:00 am Adoration to 4:00 pm Spanish Comm. 7:30 Fr. Roque day off	<b>7</b> Reconciliation 3 - 4 Choir (5:00 pm) 4:00 pm Mass 5:00 pm
<b>8</b> - Epiphany Mass 8:30, 10:30, 6:00 Coffee after 10:30 am Mass No 1st Communion or Confirmation classes	<b>9</b> Mass 9:00 am NET Team returns!! K of C 9502 7:00 pm Fr. Philip day off	<b>10</b> SVDP - 5:00 pm Mass 7:00 pm Adoration until 8:30 pm CWL - 7:45 pm	<b>11</b> - Mass 9:00 am Women's P & W - 6:45 Bible Study 9:30 Mass at McCoy 11:00 am Riverview Mass 2:00pm Finance Council 7:00 pm RCIA - 7:00 pm Choir (6:00) 7:30 pm	<b>12</b> - Mass 9:00 am Men's Prayer 6:30 am Wellington Mass 9:30 Rosary Guild 1:30 pm Holy Hour 6:00 pm Choir (8:30 & 10:30) 7:00 K of C 7325 7:30 pm	<b>13</b> - Mass 9:00 am Adoration to 4:00 pm Senior's Tea 2:00 pm Equip - St. Pat's 7:00 Spanish Comm. 7:30 Fr. Roque day off	<b>14</b> Reconciliation 3 - 4 Choir (5:00 pm) 4:00 pm Mass 5:00 pm
<b>15</b> 2nd Sun. Ordinary Time Mass 8:30, 10:30, 6:00 Parish Breakfast 1st Communion 10:10 Confirmation 5:20 Unchained Youth 6:00 pm Latin Mass - St. Pat's 6:00	<b>16</b> Mass 9:00 am Fr. Philip day off	<b>17</b> SVDP - 5:00 pm Mass 7:00 pm Adoration until 8:30 pm Parish Council 7:45 pm	<b>18</b> - Mass 9:00 am Women's P & W - 6:45 Bible Study 9:30 Sunnyside Mass 1:30 RCIA - 7:00 pm Choir (6:00) 7:30 pm	<b>19</b> - Mass 9:00 am Men's Prayer 6:30 am Valleyview Mass 10:00 Choir (8:30 & 10:30) 7:00 Live-In P & P 7:30	<b>20</b> - Mass 9:00 am Adoration to 4:00 pm Meadowlands Mass 10:00 Equip - HFP 7:00 Spanish Comm. 7:30 Fr. Roque day off	<b>21</b> Reconciliation 3 - 4 Choir (5:00 pm) 4:00 pm Mass 5:00 pm
<b>22</b> - 3rd Sun. Ord. Time Mass 8:30, 10:30, 6:00 1st Communion 10:10 Confirmation 5:20 pm Unchained Youth 6:00 pm Latin Mass - St. Pat's 6:00	<b>23</b> Mass 9:00 am Fr. Philip day off	<b>24</b> SVDP - 5:00 pm Mass 7:00 pm Adoration until 8:30 pm	<b>25</b> - Mass 9:00 am Women's P & W - 6:45 Bible Study 9:30 Riverview Mass 2:00 RCIA - 7:00 Choir (6:00) 7:30 pm	<b>26</b> - Mass 9:00 am Men's Prayer 6:30 am Wellington Mass 9:30 Rosary Guild 1:30 pm Holy Hour 6:00 pm Choir (8:30 & 10:30) 7:00	<b>27</b> - Mass 9:00 am Adoration to 4:00 pm Equip - St. Pat's 7:00 Spanish Comm. 7:30 Fr. Roque day off	<b>28</b> Wedding 2:00 pm Reconciliation 3 - 4 Choir (5:00 pm) 4:00 pm Mass 5:00 pm McCoy Fundraiser at all Masses
<b>29</b> - 4th Sun. Ord. Time Mass 8:30, 10:30, 6:00 Coffee after 10:30 Mass 1st Communion 10:10 Confirmation 5:20 pm Unchained Youth 6:00 pm	<b>30</b> Mass 9:00 am Fr. Philip day off	<b>31</b> SVDP - 5:00 pm Mass 7:00 pm Adoration until 8:30 pm	Please Note: Every third Thursday Holy Hour is at St. Patrick's 6:30 pm	Ministry to the Aged Sunnyside, Good Samar. & Riverview Wednesday Valleyview & Wellington on Thursdays Meadowlands Fridays		



# Bringing Home the Word



MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

January 1, 2012

## Touched by God's Grace

By Diane M. Houdek

Parties, New Year's resolutions, parades and football games, new calendars, date books and daily planners are all part of the secular world's marking of a new year. But time is more fluid in the church. Beginnings and endings are all wrapped in the infinite mystery of eternity. The new liturgical year began on the first Sunday of Advent.

The fact that January 1 is a holy day on the Church's calendar has less to do with the accident of its secular date than it does with where it falls in relation to Christmas. The greatest feasts in the Church year are celebrated for eight days, an Octave. The day also commemorates the ritual circumcision and naming of Jesus, eight days after

his birth. In recent years it was the day set aside for special votive Masses for world peace. The feast on today's calendar is now Mary, Mother of God.

This feast, like most of the Marian feasts, points to an important belief about her son, Jesus—in this case, his human and divine natures. The fancy Greek word used for Mary in this context is *Theotokos*, God-bearer, and it refers to the mystery that Mary is not only the mother of the human Jesus but also that she is the mother of the divine nature.

While this is the theology behind the celebration, the Scripture readings for the feast speak to the human side of Mary as well. They remind us that God's gracious and loving touch always comes to us in very human ways. The mystery of the incarnation that we celebrate in this Christmas season revolves around God taking on our human flesh and dwelling in our midst so that we might become one with him in that love.

Marian feasts, besides pointing to Christ, also tell us something about our own lives and the life of the church. St. Luke tells us that after the shepherds left, Mary "treasured all these things in her heart."

A young mother I know admitted with a touch of embarrassment that she had put the knitted cap her youngest daughter received in the hospital in a Ziploc bag in hopes of pre-

servicing the elusive newborn smell that clung to it. Anyone who has cradled an infant and kissed the top of its head will know exactly what that smell is and what it evokes.

We've all had experiences that have been so overwhelming that we have no words for them. We hold them close to protect them from the ordinary push and pull of everyday life. We turn them over and reflect on them until we find a way to share what can be shared.

As we begin this new year of 2012, we reflect on Mary's contemplative response to the birth of her son. This isn't an exercise in nostalgia and rose-colored glasses. We know the rest of the story, of course. Just in this week since Christmas, the church has celebrate the death of the first martyr, Stephen, and the tragic deaths of the Holy Innocents.

In our own lives, too, we've probably experienced the inevitable stress of the holidays. We've had expectations dashed and plans ruined and once again our hopes for world peace and family unity have most likely gone unmet. But we've also had moments of pure love, times when we've encountered God's gracious touch, either through another person or simply in the depths of our anxious hearts in the middle of the night. Like Mary, we need to learn to treasure all these things as gifts from a gracious God. †

### SUNDAY READINGS

#### **Numbers 6:22-27**

The people of Israel prepare for a new beginning. They have a special blessing from God to give them strength.

#### **Galatians 4:4-7**

Paul reminds us that the Son of God became a human being. He was born of a woman—the Blessed Virgin Mary.

#### **Luke 2:16-21**

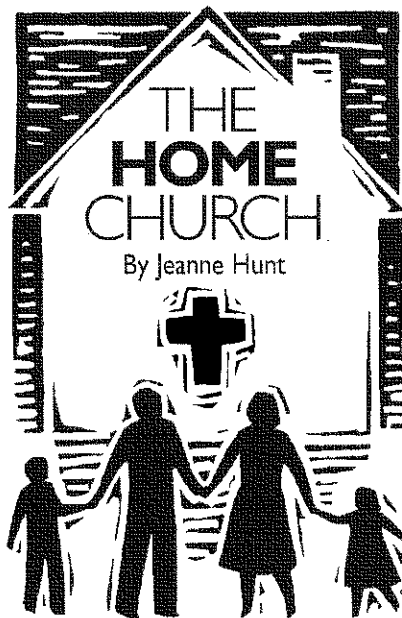
The shepherds communicate all they heard from the angels about this newborn child. Mary ponders all this in her heart.

REFLECTION  
QUESTIONS  
QUESTIONS?  
REFLECTION

- What might Mary have felt as she kept these things in her heart?
- Why does God use shepherds as the ones who first adore the child?
- What do you think the shepherds told Mary?
- Mary affirms the name the angel told her to name the Baby Jesus, why is this important?

PRAYER

Christ our Lord,  
ease the burden of  
worry we carry.  
Give us the grace  
to turn to your mother  
for help.  
She points the way  
to hope and trust.  
In union with her  
Immaculate Heart,  
we lift up our families to you  
and ask your protection.  
Amen.



As we celebrate the first day of the year, it is fitting that we invite Mary into our thoughts. Every mother's prayer on this New Year's Day is for a year of blessing for herself and her children. Mary trusted God with the path that was unfolding before her. She took motherhood and her role in salvation history in stride. She proved that it is possible to bear up with grace.

Avoiding an anxious heart requires facing the future without fear. Raising children brings with it an inevitable amount of worry and anxiety. Yet, when we learn to turn over daily worries to Jesus Christ, the Shepherd, the dynamic changes. We are no longer in charge. The Son of Mother Mary sees our anxiety and will take our needs into his hands. Make a pledge to yourself in this coming year that when you feel that sense of dread and useless worry for your child, you will step back and ask Jesus and Mary to get involved. Mary knew what it was to ponder her worries and warnings in her heart and she wants nothing more than to share our worries and lead us to peace.



Follow  
Francis

In this new year, we begin a series of reflections on the way of St. Francis. His response to the call to follow the Gospel has inspired countless people to follow him as he follows Christ.

Like many of the saints, St. Francis had a special devotion to Mary, the Mother of God. His favorite church in Assisi, the Porziuncula or "Little Portion" was dedicated to St. Mary of the Angels.

Fr. Murray Bodo, O.F.M., offers a fitting reflection for the feast we celebrate today:

"Mary was chosen by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to be the dwelling place of God become human in Jesus Christ. And how greatly honored are we as human beings, not only because God became one of us, but because God chose one of us to be his womb for nine months of his human life.

"And, as Saint Francis reminds us in another of his writings, how privileged each one of us is that we, too, can do God's will and bring him to birth in our lives."

Adapted from *The Simple Way: Meditations on the Words of Saint Francis*, by Murray Bodo, O.F.M.

WEEKDAY  
READINGS

Monday	I Jn 2:22-28/Jn 1:19-28 <i>Basil and Gregory</i>	Thursday	I Jn 3:11-21/Jn 1:43-51 <i>John Neumann</i>
Tuesday	I Jn 2:29—3:6/Jn 1:29-34	Friday	I Jn 5:5-13/Mk 1:7-11
Wednesday	I Jn 3:7-10/Jn 1:35-42 <i>Elizabeth Seton</i>	Saturday	I Jn 5:14-21/Jn 2:1-11