



Cycle ABC

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Lectionary 18

Reading I: Numbers 6: 22-27

This passage from the Book of Numbers is often referred to as the Priestly **blessing**. Although the passage consists of few verses it contains much. This **blessing** summarizes God's action towards the people. It is a prayer for prosperity and safety from one's enemies. The word peace, as in most cases in Sacred Scripture, refers to something far beyond the absence of war. It includes the concept of both prosperity and happiness. The *shalom* greeting in the Jewish Tradition is a greeting wishing the person being greeted wholeness and well-being.

Reading 2: Galatians 4: 4-7

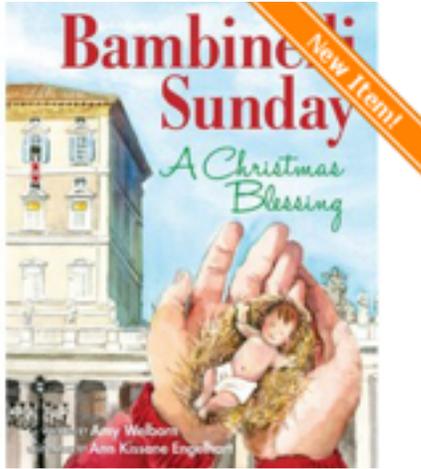
Saint Paul likes to employ images and metaphors. In this passage they can get a little confusing, however the idea is clear: the law was helpful, but only for a time. The essence of the passage is that God sent his Son, Jesus Christ for the redemption of all people. Redemption assures the worth, value, and dignity of every individual. This redemption has brought us to such a point that we may call God "Abba," which means "daddy" in Hebrew, thus allowing us to know that we are praying to a kind and loving parent. This too is a reminder that we are called to a special **blessing**.

Gospel: Luke 2: 16-21

Today's gospel continues the theme of great **blessings** coming to those who find themselves in humble situations. Mary and Joseph were simple, law-abiding people. They were poor, as were the shepherds who visited them. In those times, they did not command much respect or even much notice. True **blessing** comes to us in simple everyday experiences. The present day movement to achieve status draws us further away from the realization of what real and authentic **blessings** are in our lives. Our relationship with God and with one another are the true blessings in this life and by no means the climbing of some socio-economic ladder. Mary, the Mother of God, becomes the icon for one placing absolute emphasis on relationship and devotion to God and others.



children's
story



Bambinelli Sunday

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character
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activity

Blessing is referred to as God's favor or protection. The greatest blessing we have is the presence of God in our lives and the realization of that blessing through the love of God we experience in life because of our relationship with God and others.

Bambinelli Sunday

This story tells of a young boy by the name of Alessandro. He is living with his grandparents who run a small shop that sells figures for Nativity scenes. Alessandro is lonely for his mother and father who have gone to another country to find work. In an attempt to alleviate Alessandro's loneliness, his grandfather encourages him to make his own figure of the baby Jesus to bring to Saint Peter's Square on the Third Sunday of Advent, referred to as Bambinelli Sunday. On this day, during the noontime Angelus, the Pope blesses the children and their figures of the baby Jesus they have brought with them. Through the events and the time leading up to and receiving the blessing in Saint Peter's Square, Alessandro comes to see the world in a new way and receives the best surprise of all (**blessing**) in the end.

Activity

Step One: Have the students, using whatever art supplies available to them, create their own figure of the baby Jesus. Reread the story to them with some instrumental music in the background while they construct their own unique images of the Christ-child.

Step Two: If at all possible invite one of the parish priests, deacons or ministers of the parish to bless the figures the children have constructed of the baby Jesus. Weather permitting, gather them on the steps of the Church or in another gathering space as if they were in Saint Peter's Square seeking the blessing of the pope on their figures of the Christ-Child. This may also be an opportunity to explain what the Angelus is and its long tradition in the prayer life of the Church. The Angelus and its history and explanation can easily be found on-line by the use of a search engine.

There is an old piece of advice that we all might benefit from: When you are worried and cannot sleep, try counting your blessings instead of sheep. A great examine.



case study

Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.

What could you do today?

Begin a journal of gratitude for all the many **blessings** you are aware of in your life. This is a wonderful practice for everyone. Keep the journal at your bedside with a pen or pencil. Each evening before you crawl into bed, write the day and date on the page and then think of the events and people of the day that have been **blessings** for you. Write them into the journal as a way of thanking God for these events and people. After having written them in the journal, close the journal and hold it tight to you and pray an Our Father, recognizing that these **blessings** are indeed from a loving parent.

Look Feel Know Act

Each day try to look around you and be aware of the beauty of the world you live in, thanking God for things that you might take for granted, such as invisible things like the air you breathe. There are so many **blessings** surrounding us that we may take them for granted. Be especially attentive to the environment that you live in. Take on the attitude of someone like Saint Francis of Assisi or Saint Terese of Lisieux, who not only saw God's presence all around them but always thanked God for absolutely everything that surrounded them. Once you have noticed these things, try to feel how they contribute to your life and give thanks to God for them.

Enter into each day thanking God for all the ways God will come to you in the upcoming day and ask God to alert you to the beauty of creation, the things and people who God has given to you, so that you might always live recognizing God's **blessings** in your life. Encourage others to see what you see as a blessing in their lives as well.

In *Bambinelli Sunday* we see the loneliness of a child transformed by recognizing the things and events around him in such a way that the loneliness begins to melt away. The true **blessings** of life are recognized by Alessandro at the end of the story, which actually is the beginning of a new way of seeing life, which can always be a **blessing** for us , if we but look and are open.

Pray that you will always strive to see the many blessings around you and that in doing so you will then thank God as often as possible for these blessings. Remember that the greatest blessing is the presence of God and others in our lives. Amen.



**closing
tool**



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