

**The Octave of Christmas... Jan 1
Mary's Part in the Christmas Story**

Introduction

We are still in the midst of our Christmas Season.

While many complain about the commercialization of this Season, we can take advantage of the months long presence of Christmas by regarding it with spiritual eyes. Christmas does tear asunder the day in and day out experience of most of our year... the same ol, same ol humdrum daily routine of so much of our year. Christmas brings to our minds a sacred meaning to our lives which we can overlook at times. Christmas reminds us that our God loves us and will not abandon us to the darkness and evil which so often seems to surround us. The beauty and graciousness of our God pours thru the rent in the everyday fabric of our lives. Christmas trees, Christmas lights, Christmas presents, Christmas carols and the manger scene – all reminds us of our God's coming among us, of our God's pouring God's self out in love and coming as a little baby into our midst.

Refrain... Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel....

I Mary, Theotokos

Today continues our reflection on this sacred event.

Today is the feast of Mary, Mother of God. The early Church called her Theotokos – God bearer.

Today's celebration continues to tell us more of our story –our Christmas story...

Our Christmas story helps us to remember what our lives are all about – in the midst of a post Christian society which has so many other stories about life – from *Survivors* to *Desperate Housewives* to *Jersey Shore*... of even Newtown, CT.

Today the Church asks us to reflect on a young, prayerful, faithful servant of God who dedicated her life to doing God's will and bearing God's own son in her womb for none months... then giving birth in circumstances which were not of her choosing. But Mary was faithful and trusting.

Mary brought this baby into our world thru God's intervention and the power of God's Spirit.

This baby is our God, now made flesh, now living and breathing among us.

The early Christians called Mary Theotokos – God bearer.

This baby became the man Jesus who tried to bring his loving Father's message to our world,

tried to bring light into darkness,

and, as John's Gospel describes it,

the darkness would have none of it, but rather tried to extinguish the light.

Refrain... Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel....

II We Are now Theotokos

What might this feast mean to us today?

What might it tell us about our lives as we try to follow God's will and be faithful and trusting, as was Mary?

The Hands of Christ

During the Second World War after the D Day invasion of France the American soldiers liberated a small French village on their way through France. After the fighting the villagers came out into the village square to discover that the fighting had scarred their beautiful life sized statue of Jesus. It was covered with dirt, and had several bullet holes, along with other scratches. Worst of all, both of the hands of Christ had been blown off.

Some of the villagers suggested that they get a new statue.

Others suggested that they clean up the statue, but leave the bullet holes and the scars as a reminder of their blessed liberation. But they wanted to get a sculptor to make two new hands for the statue.

A third group suggested they clean up the statue and keep it as a reminder, but that they put no new hands on the statue.

To this day the life sized, scarred statue of Jesus stands in the village square, with no hands. Below it is a plaque, which reads, "We are the hands of Christ."

If we would honor Mary on this feast day, let us follow her example. Let us be God Bearers – theotokoi – bringing Christ into our world.

Refrain... Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel....

Conclusion

As we continue with this feast day of Mary we offer ourselves to our loving Father as did Jesus and his Mother.

We remember Jesus' love for us poured out on the Cross.

We invite Jesus into the crèche of our hearts at communion time.

We ask Jesus' strength to live his way of life in this New Year.

We ask Mary to intercede for us – so we too might be Theotokoi – God bearers bringing compassion, forgiveness, care and concern into our world in this New Year.