

Homily of Solemnity of Mary the Holy Mother of God, 2023

Numbers 6:22-27; Psalm 67:2-3, 5,6, 8; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21

January 1, the first day of the year, is a special day and a special feast of the Catholic Church. It is the day we celebrate the Solemnity of the Holy Mother of God, the highest honor and title of Mary. Mary is called *Theotokos*, meaning God-bearer or the one who gave birth to God. *Theotokos* is derived from the Greek words: *Theos* – God; and *tiktein* – to give birth. Through Mary, “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). In Luke 1:43, Elizabeth calls Mary “The Mother of my Lord.” In the second reading, St. Paul writes, “God sent his son, born of a woman” (Galatians 4:4).

As Mary was God-bearer and the channel through which Jesus came into the world, in the same way, we are to become bearers of God’s love and channels through which Jesus is witnessed wherever we are.

By this feast and celebration, the Catholic Church commends the world into the hands of Mary and prays that she continues to intercede for us in the year 2023. Today, too, through the intercession of Mary, the Church prays for world peace. Mary is called Queen of Peace.

By this feast, also, each of us is encouraged to entrust ourselves into the hands of Mary to be our mother as she is the Mother of God. The Church speaks to us as Jesus spoke to John, his beloved disciple, “Here is your mother.” Scripture says, “And from that hour the disciple took her into his home” (John 19:27). Like John, let us bring Mary to our homes. Part of the Memorare Prayer assures us, “... never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession, was left unaided.” Mary intercedes for us as she interceded for the couple at the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11).

Today is a day of thanksgiving to God for his countless blessings, and a day to pray for more blessings in 2023. We bless ourselves with the prayer of blessing in the first reading (Numbers 6:22-27):

May the Lord bless us and keep us. Amen.

May the Lord let his face shine upon us and be gracious to us. Amen.

May the Lord look upon us kindly and give us peace. Amen.

We are invited, today, to prayerfully surrender ourselves and 2023 to God. The prayer of surrendering to God by St. Ignatius is very appropriate as we begin the year:

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will. All I have and call my own, you have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace; that is enough for me. Amen.

Today is, also, a day of reflection and resolution for going forward in the New Year. This is necessary because as Philosopher Socrates says, “An unexamined life is not worth living.” One of Jesus’ parables of the kingdom of heaven comes to mind. Jesus says, “The kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. When it is full, they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away” (Matthew 13:48). As children of the kingdom, as we begin 2023, let us build on what is helpful and discard what has been unhelpful. We will have a graceful 2023 if individuals, families, communities, governments, establishments, organizations, groups, churches, countries and so on will have the goodwill and the courage to build on what is helpful and discard what is unhelpful.

May Mary, the Holy Mother of God intercede for us. Amen.

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