

Homily January 1, 2017: Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God

Today, we are celebrating The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Mary is called The Mother of God because she is the mother of Jesus who is the second person of the Trinity. Jesus is God. Therefore, his mother is mother of God. It is very important that on the first day of the year we commend ourselves into the hand of Mary for her powerful intercession. May be your New Year resolution can be to begin to pray your Rosary again, or more often, or more decades, or begin to attend the first Saturday Mass. If we take Mary as our mother, she will take us as her children.

We not only commend ourselves into her hand, there is something about her that we all need if we must live a mature and sound spiritual life. We read in the Gospel today, "And Mary kept all these things, reflecting them in her heart" (Luke 2: 19). Also, when Mary heard all Jesus said at the time she and Joseph found him in the temple in Jerusalem, the Gospel of Luke records, "[A]nd his mother kept all these things in her heart" (2:51). If being reflective was important to the Mother of God, it is even more important to us.

It is important to understand what being reflective is. It is honestly stepping back and looking critically, realistically and carefully at an issue or issues to have more balanced and holistic view or views in order to make sensible decision or decisions. The decision or decisions made after this process is, definitely, God's voice or message. The message may not be what one likes to hear or see or do. As I write this, I remember what my father (God rest him) used to tell me when came up. He used to tell me, "Go and think." He used to say, "Go and lie down on your four sides," which is to say, "Go and sleep over it." My formators in the seminary used tell us, seminarians, to "go and reflect." Socrates told his disciples that an unreflected (unexamined) life is not worth living.

As we are beginning a new year, we are therefore invited to take time, sincerely, honestly, critically, realistically and carefully examine 2016 and life in general and see the possibility of making some sensible decisions and resolutions for 2017 and for years ahead. It can also be a family reflection. A family that prays together stays together. A family that reflects together progresses together. Areas of examination can be: spiritual, financial, spending, consumption, use of time, work, medical, education, association, vision, etc. In each of these, tell yourself the bitter truth. Only truth can set us free (John 8:32). Lying is generally destructive, but the most destructive is lying to oneself. After accepting the bitter truth, one decides the best positive way to proceed with life. If plan A does not work, God, usually, provides plan B and plan C. Pray for the insight to see God's plan. Don't get stuck to a dead end of your own plan, take right or left which is God's plan and continue on your journey! New year, new look, new focus.

Some of us are, no doubt, invited to reinvent ourselves as the New Year begins, that is, give oneself a whole new perspective and vision of life and begin a new page of history. It is never too late to reinvent oneself.

Today is a day of thanksgiving. St Paul urges us in 1Thessalonians 5:18, "In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ." St Paul has said it all. Thank God for 2016, and for life in general. Life is God's indescribable gift, too wonderful for words (2 Corinthians 9:15). May God give us many more opportunities to thank him, amen.

Finally, today is a day of praying for blessings. In the first reading, God gave Aaron, the priest, and his sons the mandate to bless the Israelites. Today, God gives his Church the same mandate to bless his children. We bless ourselves with the same blessing in the first reading: In 2017 and years ahead, 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. May each of us go home with these blessings, and many more. Amen

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP