

January 1, 2023

Cycle A – Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Numbers 6:22-27

Psalm: 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:16-21

Notes from Bishop Peter

1. Nestorius was the Archbishop of Constantinople from 428-431. He taught that Mary was only the mother of Jesus Christ and not the mother of God. How could she be the mother of his divine nature?
2. We turn to the Greek philosophy of the person. All acts are attributable to the person – we don't say that my hand opened the door... or Tom Brady's arm and fingers passed the ball. We say Tom Brady passed the ball.
 - a. The **person** who was born is Jesus Christ, Son of God, divine and human. He is the Son of God and the son of Mary. In him there is one person, the divine Son of God.
 - b. The ecumenical council of Ephesus took this up and defined that Mary is "Theotokos," = The Mother of God. After this definition was proclaimed, people went through the streets shouting, Theotokos.
 - c. Thus we pray in the Hail Mary, "Holy Mary, mother of God..."
3. Jesus was born of a woman as we heard today in the Letter to the Galatians, chapter 4, so that we could be sons and daughters of God, thanks to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who empowers us to say with our sisters and brothers, "Our Father..."
 - Because he was God and man, we get a glimpse of who God is, how God thinks, how God acts... And that God is love and mercy, as we see in Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son and in John's first letter where he teaches that God is love.

4. What is Mary's role?

a. Now she continues to pray for us and lead us to her Son.

- In the apparitions – Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fátima – people go to these places to honor her and she turns them over to her divine Son. She knows her place and rejoices to be able to lead us to her Son.
- She said to Saint Juan Diego at Guadalupe: “I want very much that they build a sacred chapel on Tepeyac. There I will exalt my Son and give him to all people with all my love, He who is my help and my salvation...”
- I have heard confessions at Lourdes quite a few times and have had the touching experience of sensing grace in the hearts of those who come for the Sacrament of Mercy, thanks to Mary's intercession.

5. Application to us:

a. La Vierge Fidèle = The Faithful Virgin, a wooden statue of Mary from the 13th century in the chapel of the seminary where I studied in France. She was always faithful to God even under very difficult circumstances. She will intercede for us so that we too may remain faithful to God.

b. Her example of service of others as she did in Nazareth and now in heaven should inspire us to continue doing the same as we hear Jesus say, “There is more happiness in giving than receiving.” (Quoted by Saint Paul in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 20.)

6. And a word for New Year's Day: Jesus says, “Behold I come to make all things new.” (Apocalypse 21:5) We believe that he is constantly with us and doing that. There is hope for peace in our country and world as we commemorate the World Day of Prayer for Peace.

- A new start: To truly believe that “**God is rich in mercy.**”

7. Eucharist: Mary gave him his body and blood. May her divine Son transform us little by little into images of himself as we say with Saint Paul, “I live, no not so much I but it is Christ who lives in me.”

Amen.