

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE MOTHER OF GOD – OLPH - 2015

(Luke 02:16-21)



Happy New Year! Every year, on January 1st, we feel compelled to make **New Years resolutions** in the hope that we can improve and become **better human beings** - eat and drink less, exercise more, give up smoking or coffee, smile more, pray more, maybe even be more faithful in our attendance at Sunday Mass? Sound familiar? Well, there is nothing wrong with doing that. But, you know, it is even more profitable for our souls, if we **put ourselves in the presence of God**, the author of life, and reflect how much progress we have made in light of the Gospel. We are all bound to examine the past, reflect on our successes and failures, seek remedies for them or take credit, and revive our energies to grow in the essential virtues: patience, generosity, and joyful acceptance of sacrifice. Old and young alike are called to make this self-examination and to pray that God’s grace will strengthen and sustain them on their journey. New Years is as good a time as any.

Today we celebrate the **solemnity of Mary, Mother of God**. How can Mary and her example help us in our efforts to live out the gospel values Jesus, her son, entrusted to us? How can Mary help us to attain these virtues I mentioned just a few moments ago: patience, generosity, joyful acceptance of sacrifice? First, a few words about the **doctrine of Mary’s divine motherhood**. “...the child to be born of you will be holy; he will be called Son of God.” These are the words the angel Gabriel used in the Annunciation. Mary, as the mother of that child, gives him his human nature, which from the first moment of its existence was united to the eternal Word, the second person in the Trinity. That child, the **Word made flesh**, unites indissoluble in his person, without confusion or division, the divine and human natures. It is not enough to say that Mary is the Mother of Christ, she must also be called the Mother of God. The early Christians stated this point very clearly - as far back as the second and third century - to defend against heresies that would deny Mary the title of Theotokos - “Godbearer.” By denying that Mary is the Mother of God, one also denies the divinity of Jesus.

And now to Mary, as an example of **patience, generosity, and joyful sacrifice**. The Gospel only tells us that Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. I imagine that Mary felt some uncertainties and doubts, but she generously accepted God's will for her and with her acceptance, with her *FIAT*, she made it possible for God to become human. It took generosity of heart and spirit to accept this great task. Mary knew the risks she was taking. She knew the law, and she knew the penalty she would have to face when found pregnant without being married. But she also knew that God can be trusted, that God's promise is as good as gold and that God can make the impossible possible. So, patiently she waited, patiently she carried the child in her womb, patiently she tried to explain to Joseph what must have sounded to him like the delirious ramblings of a confused mind. She was willing to sacrifice her happiness, her future, her own life, to be obedient to God's will. She did it joyfully, without complaint, without concern for her own comfort. In her joy she proclaimed the greatness of God and left us the magnificent song of God's mercy and love. She trusted God. She believed God's promise. She accepted God's will. What a glorious example for us!

If our **New Year's resolutions** help us to become a little more like Mary, a little more patient, a little more generous, a little more joyful in accepting the sacrifices asked of us, then we have accomplished a great deal. If, with God's help, we become better disciples, we are well on our way to accomplish our goal - the heavenly Kingdom. The beginning of a new year provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the special gift of time. We recall the events of the previous year ~~and~~²express our gratitude for all the good things that have happened, all the while being aware that there have also been sad and painful and perhaps sinful realities. But most of all we celebrate the promise of a new set of months and we try to be hopeful in spite of threats of war and recession and just growing older. May the intercessions of Mary bring you much **joy and many blessings in the New Year!**