

Solemnity of Mary, The Mother of God A/2017

As we start a new period of time, let me first of all wish you a Happy and Blessed New year! I often hear people say to friends and relatives when they deal with important matters: “Good luck!”, “All the best!”, “My prayer is with you!”, or “You have all my support”, etc. These words, as simple as they might be, are an expression of a deep desire and profound wish that the person may succeed and be happy.

However, the fulfillment of these wishes depends on the performance someone can display, or on the abilities someone can demonstrate in handling what he is dealing with. The awareness that the success of any enterprise depends on the abilities or on the skills someone can show, pushes us on a spiritual level to turn to God who is the ultimate recourse for those who believe in him. Why? Because, if God does not bless us, our skills and abilities, as performing as they might be, may be doomed to fail.

In fact, according to the words of the prophet Isaiah, it is God who metes out peace to us, for it is he who has accomplished all we have done (Is 26, 12). It is that logic that presides at the celebration of the liturgy of the New Year. In fact, on the New Year, the Church invites us to understand that God is the ground of all the blessings we can enjoy in this world. Therefore, we have to put all the events of our life and the unknown of our future into his hands so that he may guide us and keep us under his constant care over the whole New Year.

We are not the only ones to think that way. In fact, in the past, the people of Israel also acted in the same way. They knew that God was the source of all the things they enjoyed in the world. That is the reason why they blessed the people by invoking the name of God on them in order to procure them favor, peace and security. The same God who blessed Israel continues to bestow his blessings and graces upon us today through his son Jesus Christ.

However, we cannot dissociate Jesus from Mary, his mother. In fact, Mary gave birth to Jesus and protected him carefully while cooperating with God’s plan of salvation for the world. That is one of the reasons why the Church dedicates the beginning of every year to Mary. By doing so, the Church invites us to discover anew the particular role Mary has played in salvation history and in the life of Jesus. The Church wants us also to discover the role Mary can play in our own lives.

There is no doubt that Mary is the mother of Jesus as man. But, since Jesus is both God and man, Mary deserves the title of “Mother of God”, just as any woman deserves the title of “mother of a lawyer” or “the mother of the president of the United States”, if her son is one.

A mother by virtue is someone who cares and protects her children. Mary has done just that with Jesus like any mother would do. As disciples of Jesus, we too, at the beginning of the New Year, put ourselves under her umbrella so that she protects us. All this fits God’s plan, because it was God who made Mary the mother of Jesus, our Savior and God.

As St Paul says, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom us so that we might receive adoption and become God’s sons and daughters. In Jesus, then, God has adopted us and made us his children so that through the power of the Holy Spirit we can call him “Abba”, which means Father.

Moreover, by receiving Jesus Christ in our hearts, we receive the message of salvation. It is that salvation which the shepherds have received by recognizing Jesus as the savior. Though there was nothing apparently noticeable or attractive about the manger, the baby and his parents, by following the instructions of the angels, the shepherds discovered the savior of the world. By finding the baby lying in a manger, they were happy to witness to the fulfillment of God's promises as they were told.

The simplicity of the faith of the shepherds challenges us who always want proof, signs and miracles to sustain our faith. The shepherds teach us that God can be found in the ordinary circumstances of life. For that reason, true faith does not come necessarily out of miracles or extraordinary things, but rather from a humble acceptance of the word of God that in Jesus Christ, God is present among us.

Quite interesting, also, is the attitude of Mary who kept in her heart all the things happening about Jesus. At this title, Mary is an example of praying people who speak more interiorly with God than they make noise around them. Such people take advantage of the events happening in their lives, whether they are joyful or sorrowful, in order to be in continual touch with God.

Mary teaches us also how to deal with the will of God in our life. In fact, from the time of annunciation to the birth of Jesus, Mary submitted herself completely to the will of God. This is quite the opposite of us who are easily frustrated, disappointed, and affected by the wind of events. This point is crucial because, as we enter the New Year, we certainly do not know how it will be. Many things will happen to us, some good, others bad. Can we have the faith of Mary in accepting the events that will happen to us and read them in the light of the word of Jesus?

Of course, we are the bearers of God's promise of blessing upon us, as we heard in the first reading. The truth, however, is that we do not know how it will be fulfilled and to what extent, and in what circumstances. That is the truth of the mystery surrounding our life and us. After all, God alone knows what lies before us and what can happen to us in the course of the New Year we start today.

Let us, then, like Mary, put ourselves into God's hands. Let us rely on his providence in whatever can happen to us! Let us hope for his everlasting help in time of need and difficulties! Peace be to you and your loved ones! Peace be to our world today as we enter the New Year! May the Blessed Mother be our companion throughout the New Year we start today! Happy New Year to everybody!

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