

JANUARY 1, 2020
Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God
Luke 2: 16-21

YOU ARE MY MOTHER

“In 1929, just 17 days short of his 9th birthday, the young Karol Wojtyla, the future Pope John Paul II came home from the school in the evening. He was accustomed to see his father — a strong soldier in the Polish army — praying on his knees on their parlor’s hardwood floor. That day, when the young Karol, saw his father praying, he saw his dad’s knees bathing in a pool of tears. “What’s wrong, Papa?” the young future Pope asked his dad. “Karol, your mother has died!” was his father’s reply. Not knowing quite what to do, the eight-year-old ran out of his home to the local parish Church in Wadowice, less than half a block for the Wojtyla apartment. He entered the Church and almost instinctively ran up the aisle of the Church to a kneeler in front of a statue of Our Lady and, with his own tears, said to her: “Blessed Mother of Jesus, I don’t know why God took my mother to His home at the time He did. But I do know one thing: YOU are my mother now!” The Holy Father, who entrusted himself to Our Lady before his ninth birthday, continued to consecrate himself to her ever after. His very motto, “*Totus Tuus*,” comes from a prayer of consecration to Our Lady written by St. Louis Marie de Montfort, which he has prayed every day.¹

During the Annunciation, the visit of the angel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin Mary, she was confused, overwhelmed, and humbly asked the angel “How can this be, I am a virgin?”² But at the end, she exclaimed: “I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word.”³ Despite her confusion, excitement and seemingly doubtful attitude, she gave all to God. Despite of uncertainties and the question ‘what will be tomorrow?’, she trusted and followed the will of God to become the Mother of God.

¹ vaticannews.va

² Luke 1:34 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

³ Luke 1:38 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

A new year dawns and there is a lot of uncertainties in our country and the world in general: the continuing violence in our streets, in our homes and the community; the increasing threat of climate change now being felt everywhere, the chaos in the Middle East, the birthplace of Jesus himself; the crises in the government and even in the church itself. Also, our own personal concerns about our health, how to make ends meet, about the well-being of our children, our work, how those people around us will survive and what will be our future. We have our personal concern as we usher to a new year.

Today, we are celebrating the first day of a new year with the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. This celebration, the Motherhood of Mary or *Theotokos*, was solemnly proclaimed at the Council of Ephesus in the year 451 by the Roman Emperor Theodosius II. This third ecumenical council, an effort to attain consensus in the church through an assembly representing all of Christendom, confirmed the original Nicene Creed, and condemned the teachings of Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, who held that the Virgin Mary may be called the *Christotokos*, "Birth Giver of Christ" but not the *Theotokos*, "Birth Giver of God".⁴

This solemnity was instituted by Pope St. Paul VI in 1970. "In his encyclical on devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Marialis Cultus*, he wrote, "This celebration, assigned to January 1st in conformity with the ancient liturgy of the city of Rome, is meant to commemorate the part played by Mary in this mystery of salvation. It is meant also to exalt the singular dignity which this mystery brings to the 'holy Mother ... through whom we were found worthy ... to receive the Author of life.' The solemnity shows the relationship of Jesus to Mary. It's a perfect example of how we should venerate Mary under all of her titles and is a good foundation for our understanding of Mary's place in Christology. The Church puts the feast of this solemnity on the first day of the New Year to emphasize the importance of Mary's role in the life of Christ and of the Church. We commemorate the various saints on the different days of the year, but Mary is the most prominent of them all. She has a special role and mission given to her by God. As Mother of our Redeemer and of the redeemed, she reigns as the Queen at the side of Christ the

⁴ wikipedia

King. She is a powerful intercessor for all of our needs here on earth. In celebrating her special feast day, we acknowledge this great gift for the Church and world; we call on her to be actively involved in our daily life; we imitate her virtuous life as a great inspiration; and we cooperate with all the graces we get through her.” The Church observes this day also as the World Day of Peace and invites us to pray specially for peace in the world. Inspired by Pope John XXIII’s 1963 encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*.⁵

Our faith reminds us that whatever concerns, questions, tensions and anxieties we might have this New year 2020, there is a strong and enduring basis for hope. As the gospel of John relates to us: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only son... not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him.”⁶ God loves us so much that even His Only Begotten Son, He gave to us for us not to despair and always be hopeful despite of all uncertainties in life. On this solemnity, we can entrust everything to God through the example and intercession Mary, the Mother of God.

My brothers and sisters, in today’s gospel we see Mary treasuring all events of Christmas in her memory and pondering them in her heart, a woman who contemplates the marvels the Almighty has done for her and for all people. During the visit, the simple and humble shepherds preached the gospel to her, repeating what the angles told them: “Today in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”⁷ This is the gospel that Mary treasured and pondered over. By this, we are all invited to treasure this same gospel that has been shared to us and be faithful to it by living it all the days of our lives. So, as we look towards this new year 2020, we ask the Blessed Mother Mary to help us to treasure and live the gospel as She did, so that we can share Christ to others as She did. And like Pope John Paul II, we may say to Mary, ‘You are my mother now!’

⁵ Vaticannews.va

⁶ John 3:16-17 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

⁷ Luke 1:11 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

Let this be our prayer: "I am all yours, O Mary, and all I have is yours. I take you completely into my home. Give me your heart, O Mary, so that I may love God with it. Pray for me, Oh Blessed Virgin Mary to your Son Jesus Christ that I may faithfully do His will and follow His commandments to love my neighbors and even my enemies. Pray for us as we start the new year and through your Son, may this new year be a grace-filled year. Amen."