

- Well...here we are...another new year already.
- It's rather nice, really, that we enter every new year with this celebration of Mary, the Mother of God...and ask for her powerful intercession in our lives and for the world for the coming year...for she is our mother as well, given to us at the foot of the cross by Jesus Himself...when He says to His beloved disciple St. John, who, in that moment, represents ALL disciples: "*Behold, your mother,*"...and, perhaps even more poignantly, says to Mary, indicating John, and thus His Church: "*Woman...behold your son.*"
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- Why do we revere (not worship!) Mary?...a question often asked of us by our non-Catholic Christian brethren.
- And we answer: Well...it is to her that the Archangel Gabriel was sent to announce that—among all the women of the earth who had, or would ever, exist—she was prepared and chosen to be the Mother of God...and would proclaim to her: "*Hail, full of grace!*", or, in more modern translations: "*Hail, O favored one!*"
- Favored by God Himself! This pronouncement alone would rightly merit reverence from all humanity for all time—she who is the favored of God above all Men and Women.
- But, of course...there is more.
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- The angel continues: "*...you have found favor with God...[and] will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus [meaning "God saves"]. He...will be called the Son of the Most High*" (Luke 1:30-33 RSV)
- And then, her aged kinswoman Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, proclaims: "*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?...blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.*" (Luke 1:42-45)
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- It is Mary's womb—uniquely for all time—to which God's Holy Spirit deigned to descend, and to conceive His Son.
- In Mary the destiny of the world is to be reversed...the serpent's head to be stricken, and, in time to come, crushed.
- On Mary was bestowed the greatest honor ever given to the fallen humanity: God taking upon Himself her flesh, and humbling Himself to be called her offspring...as St. Paul says in our second reading today: “...*God sent his Son, born of a woman...*”

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- Therefore, behold, Woman, your dignity...the sacredness of your womb...the beauty of your gender...for from one of you has come the salvation of the world.
 - ...and, thus...behold, Men, the honor given by God to Woman, and thus to dishonor one is to dishonor all...to dishonor even Our Mother who bore our savior.

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- Who can begin to estimate the holiness and perfection of her who as chosen to be the Mother of Christ...the Mother of God...and to be granted to be the mother of all mankind by Christ Himself in His last actions from the cross?
 - Jesus tells us: “*For to him who has will more be given...*” (Matthew 13:12)...and as divine favor and holiness go together, what must have been the purity, the holiness of her whom the Creator Spirit condescended to overshadow with His divine presence.
 - What, think you, then, was the holiness of that human nature of which God formed His One and Only Son...knowing, as scripture “*none can bring the clean out of the unclean.*” (Job 14.4)
 - How holy, then, is she from whom holiness itself comes forth?
 - What must have been her gifts, who was chosen to be the only near earthly relative of the Son of God...the only one whom He was bound by nature and His own Law to Himself revere? The one appointed to train and educate, to instruct and guide...to nurture and love?

- Time and eloquence cannot but fail to give sufficient honor to this Woman among women...uniquely blessed and holy among all humanity.
- We've not even touched upon her care for Him in exile in Egypt, her anguish as He was missing in Jerusalem. Her agony as she watched Him stumble—whipped, beaten and cross-laden—to Calvary. Her torment as she faithfully stood by Him at the foot of His cross. And her attentive care for His Body, the Church, in the Upper Room, on that Pentecost Day.
- As William Wordsworth would acclaim to her: *“Woman! above all women glorified, Our tainted nature's solitary boast...”* (“The Virgin”)
- Yes, Paul says today: *“God sent his Son, born of a woman...”* Why? For one reason, Paul tells us: *“...so that we might receive adoption as sons [and daughters].”*

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- January 1 is an arbitrary date to begin our calendar anew...but also a day that gives us hope.
 - And with what greater assistance can we charge forward into the uncertain future than by honoring she who is honored by God Himself?
 - As our Mother, she guides us, she prays for us, she longs for us to do the Good, and she longs for our continued presence with her in Heaven, as any mother does...and thus gives us perfect advice from the perfect mother: *“Do whatever He tells you.”*
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 - Why do we revere Mary, they ask? How can we not?
 - ...and Mary, contemplating the great honor so freely bestowed upon her by God, humbly and breathlessly declares: *“...he has regarded the [lowliness] of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed...”* (Luke 1:48 RSV)

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

2017

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Reading I

[Nm 6:22-27](#)

The LORD said to Moses:

“Speak to Aaron and his sons and tell them:

This is how you shall bless the Israelites.

Say to them:

The LORD bless you and keep you!

The LORD let his face shine upon

you, and be gracious to you!

The LORD look upon you kindly and

give you peace!

So shall they invoke my name upon the Israelites,
and I will bless them.”

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8](#)

R. (2a) May God bless us in his mercy.

May God have pity on us and bless us;

may he let his face shine upon us.

So may your way be known upon earth;

among all nations, your salvation.

R. May God bless us in his mercy.

May the nations be glad and exult

because you rule the peoples in equity;

the nations on the earth you guide.

R. May God bless us in his mercy.

May the peoples praise you, O God;

may all the peoples praise you!

May God bless us,

and may all the ends of the earth fear him!

R. May God bless us in his mercy.

Reading II

[Gal 4:4-7](#)

Brothers and sisters:

When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son,

born of a woman, born under the law,

to ransom those under the law,

so that we might receive adoption as sons.

As proof that you are sons,

God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts,

crying out, “Abba, Father!”

So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then also an heir, through God.

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

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2017

Gospel

[Lk 2:16-21](#)

The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger.

When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child.

All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds.

And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.

Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named **Jesus**, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.