

Homily New Year Message 2010
– Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

I wish you all a Happy and prosperous New Year. Traditionally, the Church opens the New Year with the celebration of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. Why? Is it that we are worshipping Mary or that she is more important than God or than Jesus Christ? Not at all! She doesn't even come close to compare with God's omnipotence and greatness. There is no basis for such comparism because Mary is a creature of God and God is Mary's creator. So what are we doing? Beloved, this is a very important issue because, I once observed a Bishop testing little kids for Confirmation. He asked them, "Children, between you and your mom, who is greater?" They replied, "Our moms". He asked them, "Who is the Mother of Jesus?" They answered correctly, "Mary". Finally, the Bishop asked, "Mary and Jesus, who is greater?" In a chorused reply, they answered, "Mary!!!!!" Can you see why proper catechesis is important to prevent any unforeseen confusion?

So why do we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary's Motherhood to begin each New Year? We do this for a number of magnificent reasons. First, it is important to state that it is not just about Mary, it is about her Motherhood. There is a big difference there. We are evoking that moment of history, that period in time when Mary conceived Jesus (the Word of God) physically in her womb and from then on became "The Mother of Jesus Christ, our Lord and God". Mary and Jesus are truly the New Eve and the New Adam. 'God, in condemning the Devil for leading the first Adam and first Eve (both originally created sinless) into sin, said, "Because you have done this, cursed are you I will put enmity between you [Devil] and the woman [Second Eve], and between your seed and her seed [Second Adam]; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel"' (Gen 3:14-15). We are then acknowledging that time when God sent the promised 'seed of the woman'. Mary's motherhood coincides with the "the fullness of time" when the incarnation of God's Son took place.

Second, our celebration shows that every year since the coming of Christ is part and parcel of this "fullness of time". This year is 2009 *Anno Domini* (AD), the Year of our Lord. See how Pope John Paul II, explains this 'time significance' in his Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Mater*,

This "fullness" indicates the moment fixed from all eternity when the Father sent his Son It denotes the blessed moment when the Word...became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:1, 14), and made himself our brother. It marks the moment when the Holy Spirit, who had already infused the fullness of grace into Mary of Nazareth, formed in her virginal womb the human nature of Christ. This "fullness" marks the moment when, with the entrance of the eternal into time, time itself is redeemed, and being filled with the mystery of Christ becomes definitively "salvation time." Finally, this "fullness" designates the hidden beginning of the Church's journey. In the liturgy, the Church salutes Mary of Nazareth as the Church's own beginning.... (*Redemptoris Mater*, 1)

Furthermore, keeping Mary's Motherhood in view yearly, advances the Church's true confession of faith, led by the true Spirit, as St. John points out, "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God" (1John 4:2). That Jesus came in the flesh means that he was born of a woman, Mary, and that he was truly a man "like us in all things, except sin" (Eucharistic Prayer IV). Today's feast therefore celebrates the INCARNATION vessel of honor. Let us not disdain this singular vessel of honor used by God. God was not ashamed to be born of a woman. Christians, therefore, need not be uncomfortable with it at all. Rather they should celebrate it, as Mary indicates, "For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name" (Luke 1:48-49).

Notably, St. Paul's statement, "God sent his Son, born of a woman ... so that we might receive adoption as sons", shows that our adoption is inseparably bound with Mary's motherhood. Mary is the Mother of Christ and we have become "other Christs" through this divine initiative and pleasure. What a blessing! In gratitude to God for all his favors, this New Year, let us make the resolution to grow more and more in our faith by always attending Mass (especially weekend Masses), attending Bible Studies and doctrinal formation, engaging in other church ministries and prayer groups, and doing active stewardship.

Finally, may God bless us this New Year with abundant blessings from above. In the words of our First Reading, "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 gives you peace!" We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen!