

## **Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God A/2008**

When someone expects an important event in his life like a new birth, a test for the driver license, or an interview for an employment, people often say, "Good luck", "All the best", etc. Behind these words, there is a deep desire that the other may succeed in what he is involved in, or is about to undertake, and be happy. The fulfillment of these wishes, however, is conditioned by the performance someone can display, or his abilities to deal with the test, for instance.

From the spiritual point of view, we can say that whatever someone might do to succeed in his undertaking, it is after all God who crowns his labor and hard work. The idea of God as the source of all blessings comes up at the beginning of every New Year in the readings the liturgy of the Church presents us so that, on the one hand, we put all the happenings and the future of our life into God's hands and, on the other, we ask God to bless us and keep us under his constant care over the whole year.

As we heard in the first reading, for the Israelites, the force of the blessing rested in the power and will of God. That is why the blessing was done by the invocation of the name of Yahweh over the people, as the creator of everything that exists and the bestower of every grace. By calling upon the name and the power of Yahweh, the people of Israel remembered God's mighty deeds from the past and hoped for a bright future.

But what would a human future be without Jesus? But what would Jesus be without Mary who said "yes" to God's plan to make her the mother of the savior of the world? As it can be seen, by dedicating the beginning of every year to Mary, the mother of Jesus, the Church would like to invite us to discover anew the particular role Mary plays in the history of salvation, as well as in the life of Jesus. 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 medical doctor", if her son is one.

The logic behind this feast is that, since Mary, the mother of Jesus, has played a particular role in his life, not only by bringing him into the world, but also by protecting and taking care of him, we too can put ourselves under her umbrella so that she protects us as she did for her son.

All this fits God's plan, since being the mother of Jesus is not something Mary arranged for herself; but it is something arranged by 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 as sons. In Jesus, then, God has adopted us and made us his children and not slaves. It is the spirit of Jesus who speaks to our hearts and teaches us to call God "Abba", Father.

By receiving Jesus Christ in our hearts, we receive the message of salvation. In fact, Luke in today's Gospel presents the shepherds, poor and despised, as the first ones to recognize Jesus as savior. By following the instructions of the angels, they found the infant Jesus lying in the manger and his parents, Joseph and Mary. They were happy to be the witnesses of the fulfillment of God's

promises, and they told others what they had discovered and all that had been told to them about Jesus.

While we often look for extraordinary signs and miracles in order to support our faith, the shepherds teach us that God has to be found in the ordinary circumstances of life. True faith does not come out of miracles and prodigious signs, but from humble acceptance of the word of God that in Jesus Christ God is present and brings us his salvation. All those who, in the footsteps of the Shepherds, recognize in this infant the hand of God, will receive the same heritage and the same salvation.

We must note, however, how Mary reacted to all that the shepherds did and said about Jesus. Luke says that “Mary kept all these things, reflecting them in her heart”. As such Mary is an example of all praying people who take advantage of any event happening in their life to be in continual touch with the Lord, offering to him the joys and the sorrows of life, the hopes and the anxieties of the unknown. Most importantly, Mary sees the will of God in all that is happening to her. While we are easily upset by disappointments of life, Mary knows how to treasure and ponder everything, looking in all that to discover the will of God.

This point is so very important at the beginning of this New Year that we have to take it seriously. As we heard in the first reading, we are bearers of God’s promise of blessing upon us. But how will that promise be fulfilled and to what extent will it be, and in which circumstance? We do not know at all. There is a real mystery that surrounds us and our future. God alone knows what lies before us and what can happen to us in the course of the New Year we start today. To be the people of faith, at the example of Mary, is to put everything in God’s hands, to be ready for whatever can happen to us, to take seriously our commitment in society and hope for God’s support in time of need.

At the end, we can only ask the Lord to give us his peace. The name of Emmanuel that was given to Jesus when he was circumcised means “God is with us “. But God is with us so that we might not be alone, so that our situation may change, so that we live in peace with God and with one another. May that peace of Jesus be in our hearts, in our families and our world! At the beginning of this New Year, let us look at Mary, the model of all mothers.

We all know how the mothers teach their children as they breast-feed them. Mothers know well the importance of what they do, say, and teach to their children. What Jesus has been in his life has been learned also from his mother, Mary. May Christian mothers know that they have a special mission, that of turning their children into peacemakers. May God bless you abundantly in this New Year!

**Numbers 6, 22-27; Galatians 4, 4-7; Luke 2, 16-21**



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