

SOLEMNITY OF MARY MOTHER OF GOD; Jan. 1st 2023
Numbers. 6: 22-27; Gal. 4: 4-7; Luke 2: 16-21

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

This Saturday evening we are gathered around the Lord at the last hours of the year 2022 and soon it will be going into the pages of history. (***On this Sunday morning, by the Grace of God we are already in the beginning of another New Year 2023 and we are standing here with certain amount of anxiety and joy too***). The name ‘January’ comes from the Roman god Janus, the god with two faces, one looking to the past and the other looking to the future. January 1st is the day we not only look forward with hope and expectations but also turn back to the past to have a good examination of conscience to see how well we fulfilled our resolutions of 2022 and see what we can do more in this New Year. When we turn back with one face no doubt, we have many reasons to be happy and grateful to God. Though we cannot claim that 2022 was a perfect year for us, it wasn’t that bad as it should have been. There were moments we failed; there were moments we were unfaithful; there were moments we suffered loss; there were occasions of celebrations and joys. There was time we felt that we could have done a little better than what we had done. God has given us many opportunities to achieve our goals and objectives of life. We may have made use of some and failed to make the best out of the rest. But we have every reason to thank God, for he has brought me to another year.

Some people are of opinion that there is no point in making New Year resolutions, as we will not fulfill them. They are wrong. We must set goals and make resolutions as a necessary conclusion of the review of the past year. And we need to review our lives from year to year to make improvements. Socrates, the Greek philosopher says, ‘**The unexamined life is not worth living.**’ Soon you are going to read in the newspapers and listen to the TVs about the resolutions of many people. Most of those, however, are not resolutions at all but only wishes. What is the difference between a resolution and a wish? *A wish identifies a goal one wants to reach whereas a resolution specifies the steps one will take to reach it.* For instance, the wishful person says, “I want to stop smoking” and the resolved person says, ‘I will start cutting short of the number of cigarettes I smoke daily.’ So let us take **some resolutions** instead of wishing something. During this New Year let us have something to dream; something to do; something to love. Let us remember the **proverb, “Cherish your yesterdays, dream your tomorrow but live your today.”** So with the second face let us look forward with hope and expectations.

Today we also celebrate the Solemnity of Mary Mother of God. This feast has made a lot of rage among the Protestants. Somebody told me that he has seen a sign on the wall of a

Protestant church which said, "*Catholics, God has no mother.*" It shows their displeasure on Catholic Church which has given Mary the title "Theotokos," means Mother of God.

However, long before the Protestant Movement began by Martin Luther, the objection to the title "Mother of God" arose in the Catholic Church in fifth century itself. Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople (428-431), incited a major controversy. He stated that Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ, a regular human person, period. To this human person was united the person of the Word of God (the divine Jesus). This union of two persons--the human Christ and the divine Word-- was "sublime and unique" but merely accidental. The divine person dwelt in the human person "as in a temple." Following his own reasoning, Nestorius asserted that the human Jesus died on the cross, not the divine Jesus. As such, Mary is not "Mother of God," but simply "Mother of Christ" --the human Jesus. Sound confusing? It is, but the result is the splitting of Christ into two persons and the denial of the Incarnation.

Thus on June 22, 431, the Council of Ephesus convened to settle this argument. The Council declared, "**If anyone does not confess that the Emmanuel is truly God and therefore that the holy Virgin is the Mother of God (*Theotokos*) (since she begot according to the flesh the Word of God made flesh), *anathema sit.*"** Therefore, the Council officially recognized that Jesus is one person, with two natures--human and divine--united in a true union. But that union cannot be separated. Secondly, Ephesus affirmed that our Blessed Mother can rightfully be called the Mother of God. Of course, Mary is not Mother of God, the Father, or Mother of God, the Holy Spirit; rather, she is the Mother of God, the Son--Jesus Christ. The Council of Ephesus declared Nestorius a heretic and the Emperor Theodosius ordered him deposed and exiled.

It is the highest title of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Theotokos, Mother of God. Mothers bring life, a gift from God, into the world. That's why you sometimes hear even the Church referred to as "Mother". Even Elizabeth, at her meeting of Mary cried out, "**Most blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.** Even before the Council of Ephesus, in the early history of the Church, our Blessed Mother was given the title "Mother of God." St. John Chrysostom (AD 407), for example, composed in his Eucharistic Prayer for the Mass an anthem in honor of her: "It is truly just to proclaim you blessed, O Mother of God, who are most blessed.."

On this New Year's Day the blessing of Aaron in the Book of Numbers, as we heard, is very meaningful for us. During this whole Year, "*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!*"

