

## Mary Mother of God “Potentialities to Actualities in 2019”

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We have meditated a lot on the role of Mary in salvation history during this past season of Advent. As I meditated on the Gospel reading today, I couldn't help but be struck by the sentence, “And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.” In one sentence St. Luke summarized the heart of contemplative life. And it is good for us to hear this because it is my take that we are not a very contemplative people. We probably spend too much time staring into our screens than into our hearts. It made me wonder, if I had a New Year's resolution to become more contemplative, what would that look like?

Of course, today we are also celebrating the New Year. How fitting it is that we begin the New Year with Mary the Mother of our Lord? She is the first disciple, the first to say “yes” to the Lord, even when she likely didn't have much of an idea of what lied in store for her in the future. She said “yes” to God's plan for her, and the potential plan God had set forth for her became an actuality. As Mary's child was born and the first of many days of Jesus' childhood began to unfold, she entered into this adventure as a woman of profound faith.

To bring this picture to the most local level, I imagine if you are like me, you may have prayerfully made plans for yourself for the upcoming New Year. People make New Year resolutions...which we usually break and try again when Lent comes around. Whether it is to lose weight, accomplish other personal goals at home or at work, set priorities for family life, whatever it is, all of us perhaps have an idea or goal that rests in the realm of potentiality within us. You see, I believe the realm of potentiality is that place within our soul where all our goals live. The movement of these goals from the land of potentiality to the land of actuality is a spiritual process that is usually in high gear this time of year. It is most helpful when this process becomes a prayerful process, a contemplative process, a truly spiritual process. However, even then, how difficult it is to make potentialities actualities?

I think the biggest culprit keeping us from accomplishing our goals in life is the lack of interiority, a lack of meditating and contemplating on God's plan for us as individuals and as a human race. We rush from this thing to that without stopping and asking ourselves where was God in that moment? You see, God is always present in every situation, but it takes the kind of soul that knows how to stop, quiet our minds, and contemplate these situations, keeping these things in our heart like Mary did so we can hear God talking to us. Once we learn to slow down and savor life's moments rather than rushing to and fro can we give the potentialities in our life enough oxygen to become actualities.

On God's side too, I believe there is a realm of potentiality and the realm of actuality. The land of potentiality is what God hopes for us. The land of actuality is where God allows us to be because he will not coerce good decisions out of us. Even as a race marked by original sin which causes us to perpetuate violence in our world, poverty and every conceivable bad decision

imaginable, our salvation is still in the land of potentiality for God. This is what we celebrate on Christmas: God's potential plan to save us becoming an actuality in the birth of Jesus.

In the incarnation of our Lord, the message is God is one of us now. God is in solidarity with us. God loves us and will not abandon us in the good times or in our bad times. My friends, God is telling us on this feast day and on the first day of an uncertain 2019, "I am one of you, I love you, I will not abandon you". God will help us make the important potentialities of life to become actualities if we just open our hearts to him.

You see, Mary could have said "yes" or "no" to God. She said "yes" and Jesus receives his human nature from her. By assuming our humanity into his divinity, and redeeming us through his passion death and resurrection, Jesus made us adopted children of our Father in Heaven. In a remarkable circle of events, Mary becomes truly our spiritual mother. And this is very good news because she can teach us how to turn the grace-filled potentialities in our lives into actualities if we just follow her example.

Today we celebrate a young woman who 2019 years ago said "yes" to become the Mother of God. As we begin this New Year, we can ask ourselves what invitation is God giving us that, like our mother Mary, requires a "yes" from us and not a "no"? Any spiritual master will tell you that we can't get an answer to that question from our smart phones or computer screens. We need to give ourselves permission to turn our devices off from time to time, learn how to quiet our minds, open our hearts so to learn how to pray. If we do, we just might hear God inviting us to a better future in 2019. And when he does, Mary's sincerest recommendation today is to say "yes".