

## Mary Mother of God 2013 New Year Resolutions

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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.

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. 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.

I believe the realm of potentiality is that place within our soul and in society where all our goals live. The movement of these goals from the land of potentiality to the land of actuality is a thought 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. However, even then, how difficult it is to make potentialities actualities.

I think the biggest culprit keeping us from accomplishing our goals is the lack of interiority, a lack of meditating 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 good time or that bad time? God is always present in every situation, but it takes the kind of soul that knows how to stop and contemplate these situations, keeping these things in our heart, for us to 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 the possibility of becoming actualities.

My friends, on God's side too, 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. When as a race we made the original bad decision, our salvation was still in the land of potentiality for God.

What we celebrate at Christmas is that God's potential plan to save us became an actuality in the birth of the Christ child. The potentiality of Christ's conception in the Incarnation, however, rested on the Virgin Mary saying yes to God's plan and not "no", to give actuality by providing a full human nature to the Deity regardless of the sacrifice.

In the incarnation, the message is God is one of us. 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 2013, "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 do our part.

Everything we experience or suffer in this life can help us on the path to salvation or hinder us. Everything we experience or suffer in this life can help us on the path to salvation or hinder us on the measure we meditate and contemplate God's presence acting in our life.

You see, Mary could have said yes or no to God. She said yes and God is gifted his human nature from her. By assuming our humanity into his divinity, and redeeming us from the inside out 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 mother, in faith however. Whether this is a potential reality for you or an actual reality is up to you as a person of faith.

I always love it when I hear Archbishop Fulton Sheen say that if we ever feel like the gates of heaven are locked to us, all we need to do is look for our mother Mary who will happily sneak us in through an open window.

We all have New Year Resolutions, don't we? If we have a contemplative side, meditating on God's presence in our life, perhaps we do. What is then God's New Year resolution to us? God's resolution is this: no matter what happens in 2013, God is right there with us through thick in thin, through good decisions and bad decisions, to love us, and to lead us gently closer to the actual heaven God has prepared for us. For souls still making decisions in space in time, our future in this Kingdom is still in the land of potentiality. In 2013, we are given the gift of a new year, to follow Mary's example, to contemplate on God's plan for us as individuals, as a family, as a parish as, a country and as a world. Can we take the steps necessary to cooperate with God's grace? Today, we celebrate that a young woman 2013 years ago who said yes to become the Mother of God, the Mother of the Church, and our model for discipleship. This weekend we contemplate God's invitation to us for this coming year. As we begin 2013, can we hear God inviting us to a better future even if this involves sacrifice? A more important question: What will be our response?