

Holy Mary Mother of God “Reflecting on our Yes to God.”

Bishop Frank Schuster

Each year, since the feast day of Mary Mother of God falls on New Year's, I have gotten into the habit of finding interesting New Year's resolutions. The reason for this is because many of us make New Year's resolutions and it is good to have goals after all...even if we end up breaking most of them. This is why God invented Lent so we will have an opportunity to try again! When it came to resolutions this year, I was personally inspired by the person who said on social media, “I’m gonna lose weight. I’m gonna exercise every day. I’m gonna go on a diet and stick to it... Is that cake?” There was another one that said, “I am going to stop make excuses and fish more often”. My favorite on social media was “My new year's resolution is to quit social media”!

Here we are again, my friends, we have finished one year, and we now welcome a new year. There are many who had a good year last year, thank goodness, however there are many who may be glad that 2023 is over for one reason or another. Entering a new year gives us all an opportunity to start anew, even if we secretly wonder if 2024 will be a happy new year. We all hope so. Maybe take a moment and examine your heart to see where you are at. If things are good right now, count your blessings. If things haven't been so good, consider what the Gospel has to tell us.

What does the feast day today of Mary Mother of God have to say about any troubles we are facing or may have to confront this year? What does this day have to say about God's response? What the Gospel has to say is this: when times could not get darker, God became human for the sake of our salvation. The omnipotent one decided to be birthed. The eternal one now has a mother. The feast day of Mary the Mother of God reminds us that God so loved the world that he sent his only Son for the sake of our salvation. He walked with us. He ate with us. He healed our wounds from within our nature. He remained loyal to us even when we weren't. My friends, we begin the New Year with the Christmas message that God decided to have a mother, to enter our history with all its blessings and hurts. The solemnity of Mary Mother of God gives a message to humanity, and it is this: In the incarnation 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 2024, “I am one of you, I love you, I will not abandon you”. We would be well served if we followed Mary's example in our Gospel reading today and kept God's word in our hearts and reflect upon it.

We would be well served by reflecting more on God's activity in our lives because everything we experience or suffer in this life can help us on the path to salvation or potentially hinder us depending on our response. Mary understood this. Mary could have said “yes” or “no” to God. She said “yes”, and God is gifted his human nature from her. This is what she is reflecting on in her heart in each day. Each day brought her and the world a new grace as a result of her “yes”. This gift can also be ours if we say “yes” to Jesus this coming year.

That is Good News of the incarnation. 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 has become our mother in faith now. No human person is closer to God than Mary. She is therefore the first of all saints, and our intercessor in time of need. What better way to begin 2024 than by celebrating Mary, our model of discipleship and promise of our future?

And so, God has given us a precious gift of a new year in 2024. Every year brings with it a potential to bring us closer to God. Like Mary, we can say “yes” or “no” to God. How much better would 2024 be if we said “yes” to God, and to reflect more in our hearts each day about what the grace that “yes” offers us? What is then God's New Year resolution to us? God's resolution is the same this year as it has been for centuries. And this is an insight I received from Archbishop Sartain several years ago: whenever we lift a prayer to God asking for this, that or whatever, when God answers back with the name of Jesus, with just that one word, he answers our prayers completely because in Jesus God has given us his everything. And when we turn to Mary our Mother in faith with the matters that concern us, when she responds with the name of her Son, Jesus, she also has answered all our prayers because by giving us Jesus, she gave us her everything too. I find it inspirational that the last words we hear from Mary in the bible are from the Gospel of John, at the wedding at Cana, when she says, “Do whatever Jesus tells you to do.” Very good advice from our loving spiritual Mother! Again, like Mary, we can say “yes” or “no” to this invitation, can't we? Imagine if we said “yes”! If we say “yes” to Mary's invitation, no matter what happens in 2024 God will be right there with us, to love us and to lead us ever closer to the Kingdom he has prepared for us through Christ our Lord. Amen.