Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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“Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart” (Luke 2:18).

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Nm 6:22-27; Ps 67; Gal 4:4-7; Lk 2:16-21

We mark the start of the New Year by celebrating the motherhood of Mary. As she gave birth to Jesus, the firstborn of the Second Creation, so a whole new era of possibility was born for us all.

The First Creation, limited by sin and death, was delayed ("O happy fault") from its promised journey to the joy and freedom of life with God. Jesus restores the original plan and purpose of human life by his obedience, making it possible for us to know friendship with God.

To see a mother holding her newborn is to see the relationship that most reflects the intimacy that exists between God and every human being. As a baby’s eyes come into focus, the first thing they behold is the face of the mother, gazing lovingly back at them.

The image and likeness of God, eternal Mother and Father to us all, is communicated in that lifelong look of love. We learn who we are in that intimate exchange. We become human beings with a divine destiny. We bear the family resemblance of God.

Mary also models for us the meaning of discipleship. She is attentive to her son, first in his humanity, but then in the mystery of his divinity. What she conceived and gave birth to, in turn conceives and gives birth to her as she comes to the full realization of her human existence within the life of the Trinity.

Mary takes her place with all the baptized as a member of the body of Christ, as our sister in faith, transformed by her sharing in the suffering and death of Jesus so as to share in his glory. As Jesus is the first fruits of the new creation, so Mary is the first fruits of the life of the church, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born into the world at Pentecost, the sign of the ongoing harvest of God’s glory. This harvest is the mission of the church.

Mary shows us how to ponder this same mysterious process in our own lives. Every human experience -- especially our suffering and struggles -- can be taken into prayer, our intimate exchange with God, who never ceases to embrace and gaze at us.

We welcome the New Year in that face-to-face communion. Here is everything we need to grow in Christ during the days and months of 2023. Let it be a year of grace and favor, our jubilee in God and with one another.