

REFLECTION for Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Fr. Don

It is January 1, 2017, it is a Holy Day of obligation, it is World Day of Prayer for Peace, and it is a day on which the Church celebrates the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in salvation history- as Mother of God.

Undeniably, Mary is the biological mother of Jesus. But today's Gospel tells us about Mary's motherhood beyond her giving birth to Jesus. Just as her divine motherhood was a mystery to her from the beginning when an angel told her she, a virgin, would conceive, so her human motherhood is again a mystery she can only ponder as *'she treasured all these things in her heart.'* Mary, the First Apostle, was the true *'hand-maiden of the Lord'* and freely obeyed God by humbly saying *'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'* She lovingly accepted Jesus as her son in submission to her God.

Undeniably, we know, beyond doubt, that Mary was a loving mother who nurtured her son.

She loved her child as all mothers love their children. We are left to wonder if she ever fully realized that she was the Mother of God. The title 'Mother of God' (Theotokos) for Mary was confirmed and conferred by the First Council of Ephesus, held at the Church of Mary in 431. The Council decreed that Mary is the Mother of God *because her son Jesus is one person who is both God and man, divine and human.* We accept Mary's title flowing from this belief. God exists as Three Persons- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Son, the Word, became flesh. She nurtured the spark that flamed to be the Light of the World.

There is a lot of mystery and awe surrounding the role of Mary and Joseph as the human parents of Jesus. What a grace it was for them, yet, what a responsibility. After all, their son is God the Son. Together they had to nurture the One who gives Life to all- our one example of the creature nurturing the Creator.

Again, what is not a mystery for us is the fact that they were good parents.

We learn in today's Gospel, how Mary and Joseph had the baby circumcised when he was eight days old. (This is akin to our having children baptised as infants in today's world). They named the child Jesus, which means Savior, and began his initiation into the Jewish faith. They had the privilege/duty to teach the Word of God to speak human words in a human language, to oversee/guide His maturation into his Jewish faith with its many laws and practises, and to equip him with the tools/skills required to make his way in life. We know this because this is the role of all parents. And they were the Holy Family.

Mary and Joseph were righteous and devout Jews. So, Jesus was taught to pray the Shema- the daily Jewish prayer of praise presented in today's first reading. He was taught about God the Father who had long ago established a covenant relationship with his Chosen People. Yes, Mary would have formed Him to believe in the One who is true Wisdom and the Teacher of all.

Again, we wonder, and it is good for us to wonder, whether as the title of a beautiful modern song says: 'Mary, did you know?' In faith, we say today: Mary, we do know, you are the Holy Mother of God.

The full meaning of the Holy Mother of God is that Mary gave to a transcendent divine God of incredible supremacy, the vulnerability of a Body which could suffer, die, and save. And so, we honour her today, because it was she who gave us our Saviour, she is the Mother of God the Son-Jesus Christ.

As part of the church, she is also our Holy Mother. Jesus once said to his disciple: *'Here is your mother.'* Well, we can be that disciple. Mary was the first in a long-line of disciples which now, hopefully, includes you and me. As they said in Ephesus long ago, Mary is our **Theotokos**- Greek word for **God-Bearer**.

Sacred Heart Parish

A Stewardship Parish in Love with Christ



Parish Information

Parish Administrator: Fr. Don Leonard

Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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Weekend Masses: Saturday 4:30 p.m. Sunday 11:00 a.m.

Reconciliation: Wednesday after Mass, or by request

Mass During the Week: Wednesday, Thursday at 7:00 p.m.
Friday 2 pm Lohnes

Holy Hour of Adoration: Third Sunday of the Month at 2 p.m. at Sacred Heart Church

Marriages: Six months' notice is required. A year's notice is recommended.

Baptisms: Celebrated at Weekend Mass after preparation session.

January 1, 2017

The Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

<u>RECEIVED WITH THANKS</u>	Dec. 24, 25
Collection	4517.60
Advent Folders	601.75
Bldg. Fund	10.00
Votive Candles	60.00
Dues	150.00
Mass Stipends	40.00
Flowers	10.00
Sunday Missals	132.65
Sale of Bible	30.00

HEART-FELT THANKS TO ALL

The parish wishes to thank all who helped make the Christmas Season such a blessed occasion here at our church. From the traffic control, to cleaning, to children participating, to the beautiful carols, everyone did their part. Indeed, we are a healthy and vibrant parish community filled with willing volunteers.

MASS INTENTIONS

Jan 2	No Mass
Jan 3	No Mass
Jan 4	Bernadette & Anthony George
Jan 5	Charles Gregory
Jan 5+	Gerald McHugh
Jan 6	Intentions of Rita Hall/John Mendes
Jan 7	Gerald Gallant
Jan 8	Parish Community

MINISTERS (Jan 7,8)

<u>READERS</u>	<u>EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS</u>
Art Hall	Joanne Connolly, John Carroll
Edna Dwyer	Frank Lewis
Joe/Marie Byrne-	<i>Communion to the Sick</i>

Mike Leonard	Don Gallant, Barbara Neville
Debra Allen	Hedy Kenny

HAPPY NEW YEAR

As we begin 2017, we wish to express our gratitude to Jesus for inspiring all of you to support and improve life for all of us who call ourselves members of Sacred Heart Parish. May God daily continue to bless each of us.

SINCERE SYMPATHY

We express our sorrow and offer our prayers to the family of the late **Ralph Wilton**. And to Clarence Woodman on the death of his brother **Harry Woodman**. May they rest in peace.

CONGRATULATIONS

To David and Allyson Brake on the baptism of their child- **Willow Hope Brake**- at our church this past Wednesday evening. God bless her.

PARISH POT-LUCK SOCIAL

This social was recently cancelled because of bad weather. It is scheduled for **Ole Christmas Day, this Friday, Jan 6**. It will take place at the School cafeteria beginning at 6 pm. Come join us in saying goodbye to Christmas. Mummies and musicians will be allowed in.

BIBLE STUDY

The group will next meet in the Parish house on Monday evening Jan. 2 at 7 pm. We encourage newcomers to join us in 'breaking open the Word of God' as found in the Gospels. We also break open a fine lunch afterwards.

PARISH COUNCIL

All members are reminded of our meeting on **Monday, Jan 9, at 7 pm** in the parish house.

NEXT PARISH BINGO

It is scheduled for **Sunday, Jan 8 at 2 pm** in the School cafeteria.

PARISH SECRETARY

Veronica has indicated that she will be *retiring soon*. We thank her most sincerely for her years of dedicated and committed service to the good of Sacred Heart Parish. And we wish her all the best in the future. We also anticipate in hope that she will be around helping-out as a volunteer in a more relaxed parish situation. **Today**, we begin advertising for a replacement. There is a job description available on our website for anyone interested. It includes working 16 hours a week, data-entry skills, website management, familiarity with various office computer programs, and personal relationship skills. If interested, please contact the Parish Office.

ADULT FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Due to bad weather and personal commitments, these sessions have now been postponed until mid-January. Please watch for further details and come enrich your Catholic faith.

CALLING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

We are planning to offer a Youth Mass on the last weekend of February. To do this, we require our young people to participate. At this Mass, they will take the lead in the many ministry roles. *We have some more good news*. In March, NET Ministries will spend some time working with youth in our parish.

APPRECIATION SOCIALS FOR OUR VOLUNTEERS

We want to show our appreciation to our Parish Council and Finance Committee members, our many Liturgical Ministers, our Choirs, and members of other Parish groups. One way to do this is to offer them an evening with a meal and a social gathering. It is planned to do this early in January. This is notice to all our volunteers- let

us know some possible convenient dates.

AN IRISH BLESSING for New Year's

May the road rise-up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields
and until we meet again, may God hold you in
the palm of His hand.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

To assist those in need - 638-9010

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

With the arrival of a new calendar year, many people make these in looking to improve themselves in some way. Why not include a resolution to improve your relationship with God? Resolve to talk to God more often (perhaps using the two prayers that follow). In the morning, thank Him and ask for His blessing to help in getting through the day. Before sleeping, thank Him for the day and ask for another blessing. This is praying ceaselessly.

JESUS PRAYER and the SHEMA

These two simple prayers have a lot in common. Catholics are encouraged to say the Jesus prayer in the morning and in the night:
Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Jews are encouraged to say the Shema prayer in the morning and in the night:

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God; the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Let us be blessed by daily saying both. There is One God to whom we all pray.