

Reflection: January 1, 2023

- Well the gifts have been opened, the Christmas songs are gone from the radio. And while the world tells us Christmas is over, look around our beautiful church – it is still Christmas for one more day.
- Christmas, a time we celebrate that amazing, unimaginable thing God did for us. As our second reading today reminds us: He became one of us. Let that sink in a moment, God the creator of everything and everyone loved us so much He decided to take on human form to show us how to live a good, happy life. And to show us we are His daughters and sons – on a journey destined for eternal life. How awesome is that!!
- It is so awesome, so remarkable that as a church we celebrate Christmas for not one but eight days (December 25th – January 1st). We call this the Octave of Christmas because one day is not enough time to contain such a great celebration. (Pause)
- If you haven't heard the Homily Cardinal Dolan spoke at this year's Christmas Eve Mid-night Mass, I urge you to go on line and Google it. The theme of his homily was: We have a God who will not take "no" for an answer. And in his talk the Cardinal gave examples from throughout history of all the times God offered His people love and friendship but they were unfaithful – they said "no". But despite their "no", God continued the offer – over and over again. It's a wonderful homily so find it on-line and listen.
- I mention this because today, within the Octave of Christmas, we celebrate a special feast day: The Feast of Mary: Holy Mother of God. Mary, a person who said "Yes" to God's offer.
- This feast day has very interesting roots. Way back in 431, there was a bitter controversy about the role of Mary in the Catholic Church. Church leaders debated

the question: Who is Mary in God's plan? In the end, the bishops declared that **Mary is really the mother of Jesus** and **Jesus is really our Lord and God**. So, it must be said that **Mary is the Mother of God**.

- Today our Church calls us to reflect on Mary. Her life, and what Lessons we can learn from Our blessed Mother.
- I'd offer that the most important thing we see in the life of Mary is that her love for God was so great, her trust in God so perfect – that she “**let God be God**”. (placed no restrictions, had no doubts)
- Mary let God be God. She had great trust in God even though she had questions, even though she faced difficulties. Mary trusted in God's almighty power, and that God's great love would carry her through everything.
- And Mary's example puts the question before us: Do we let God be God- in our lives. Do we keep trusting in God's plan, His power, His love?
- When we doubt we will get that job we want or get into that school – do we keep studying? keep giving it our all, keep doing our part - and let God be God.
- When it seems that illness is not going to get better – do we keep hopeful, find the joy in each day, push thru the physical therapy, keep fighting the addiction, keep doing our part and let God be God.
- When that child or family member is way off the right path – we **need** to keep praying for them, being there for them, modelling what love looks like. And let God take care of the rest.
- And here is the thing, if it doesn't go the way we plan it or we want it to go - it is just because God has something bigger, better in store – we just need trust and do our part and let God be God.

- Mary showed how to do this, didn't she?? But let's consider this question: **What if Mary said "no"**.
- What if Mary said no to the angel, who told her God's plan was for her to bear a son who would be the savior? What if she said "No, I'm, too afraid, this is too hard. I can't do this. What if she lived a life without the courage to realize her destiny.
- What if Mary decided not to tell Joseph and her parents about her pregnancy. What if she lied or ran away and hid the child? What if she lived a life without the love and help and understanding of others – especially those closest to her.
- What if Mary tried to stand in the way of Jesus' ministry, keep him home, talk him out of this crazy dangerous thing? What if she held on selfishly and lived a life without sacrifice.
- What if she didn't tell Jesus "they were out of wine" at the wedding feast at Cana. Didn't think Jesus could help this newly married couple with His very first miracle. What if she lived her life without believing in miracles and the miraculous power of her son.
- [What if she lived her life without praying over things, without pondering events in her heart (the good and not so good things). What if she didn't look for God's purpose and his presence in the day to day events of her life. What if she lived life without direction, without meaning or purpose.]
- And what if she turned away when Jesus was arrested. Refused to let herself enter into His suffering. Feel the pain of another. Chose not to be there to comfort and show she cared. Then she would have lived her life without ever knowing what true love is all about.
- How different Mary's life would have been had she said no to God's invitation, to God's plans.

- She could have. God filled Mary with grace, but He didn't take away her free will. Mary drew on that gift of grace (a gift we all have) drew on that strength in order to keep trusting God and His love no matter what life threw at her.
- Each event we just considered, all the things asked of Mary **required the same important thing – trust in God. And to let God be God.**
- If Mary was to plan out her life and her sons life – her way – do you think she would have mapped it out this way? Giving birth in a stable? Do you think she ever imagined her Son would be arrested and put to death on a cross?
- But each of these times she trusted. She didn't turn away. She did her part and let God be God.
- And we see Mary's yes to the will of God; Mary's trust in God's great love was rewarded. God had something bigger and better in store for Mary and each of us.
- Part of God's plan for Mary was for her to witness the joy of the resurrection and **the proof** to her (and all of us) that we are destined to so much more beyond this life.
- Another part of God's plan for Mary was to give her a special place in heaven and a special role as our mother.
- So we look to Mary, our spiritual Mother as a model for our lives because she lived through what we are living through: life, with all its joys , sorrows , challenges and confusion.
- We look to our mother for guidance and we learn some important things.
- Mary shows us how to have the courage to be who you are meant to be. Whatever new road you are looking down (a job, a move, a relationship, a vocation) don't let

fear stop you from believing and trusting that God has a love filled plan for each of us.

- Mary shows us that if we are going through a difficult , confusing time don't carry these things alone. Trust in others to understand, to help, to love ...God put them in your life for a reason.
- Mary teaches us the importance of making sacrifices. Life is not all about us. Sometimes we need to do things we didn't plan to do , or don't want to do – because it is for the good of someone else. (Caregivers and parents you know how difficult but how important these sacrifices are) Pause
- Mary shows us we can believe in miracles. Big ones like Jesus changing water to wine at a wedding feast. But also the smaller miracles – the grace to look at something differently, to accept something hard, to cherish time spent with those we love – all miracles.
- And Mary reminds us that true love, the love of Jesus, requires that we bring that love to others. Especially the poor, the sick, the lonely. True love involves entering into that person's life and feeling their pain. Being there to help, to comfort and to show you care and most importantly to remind them God loves and cares for them.
- Finally, Mary reminds us to take time out of our busy lives to ponder things in our hearts. To pray and reflect on things. To think about the events going on in our lives and try to see God's presence and purpose in them. To ask ourselves: "How has God spoken to me today? What is God calling me to do next?"
- This is what Mary did. Mary knew God was with her and she cherished that relationship. She loved God, she trusted God, she listened for God. Its how she found meaning and purpose and direction in her life.

- It's how she was able to say "Yes" to God's will rather than "No". It's how we can say yes to God's will in our lives.
- So May we imitate this attitude of Mary and continue to look to her as an example and seek her guidance as we enter another new year on our journey as children of God.