

***Mary, the Holy Mother of God  
Octave of Christmas (Latin Mass)  
January 1, 2023***

***Year of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ark of the New Covenant***

*“The development, desire by us, of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is an indication of the Church’s genuine piety. This devotion fits – as we have indicated above – into the only worship that is rightly called ‘Christian,’ because it takes its origin and effectiveness from Christ, finds its complete expression in Christ, and leads through Christ in the Spirit to the Father.”*  
*(Pope Paul VI, For the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, p.4)*

Over these past few years, we have, as a church family, tried to take upon ourselves a resolution similar to the many New Year’s resolutions taken on the first day of January. Our resolutions have centered upon growth in personal holiness. This year, I would like to try something different. For our parish New Year’s resolution, I propose we dedicate the year 2023 to the Blessed Virgin Mary, similar to our dedicating 2022 to her husband Saint Joseph. It is my hope that by encouraging a year-long prayerful study of the Mother of God, we will find ourselves growing in our love of the Blessed Virgin Mary which can only lead to a deepening love of her Son.

Outside of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, it could be debated, may be the one person throughout human history with the most information represented based upon so little initially given. Her image has become immortalized through the great masters of word, thought, paint, wood, and stone. Yet within this vast ocean of love and thought dedicated to her person, what do we, individually and as a family, really know about her and why our Catholic Faith holds her so very dear? It shall be our goal this year to navigate these waters, so deep with thought, to explain this to you as best as we can. Although, I could preach on Mary every Sunday, I would still not make a pinprick into the theology. I shall again follow the guidelines we established last year. We will use both the first and third weekends of the month for a catechetical/spiritual reflection upon Mary, the Mother of God.

Let us begin by turning to the great Church Fathers. These are the first great minds within our Christian/Catholic faith. These are the men who would begin to lay the foundation upon which all Christian thought would later develop. However, and this is vitally important, their beginning statements involving Mary were not focused upon her as the central element. Rather these initial thoughts were dedicated toward a fuller understanding of her Son, Jesus. It is always helpful to remember that the Bible, as we have it today, was not available in the first rays of the dawn of Christianity. What was available, and greatly influenced this generation, was the first teachings of the faith tied directly to the Apostles. This is why the leaders/presbyters of the first Christian communities are called the Apostolic Fathers. It is to them that the opening salvo of doubts concerning the humanity and divinity of Jesus are

directed. Again, please understand, these men (Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, Clement of Rome, to name a few) are alive as Christianity is beginning to be preached by the Apostles and disciples of Jesus to a world influenced by Greco-Roman philosophy and polytheistic religions. Their initial responses had to be both well-constructed and forceful enough to answer the questions posed by the world in which they lived, while at the same time, defending Christianity from the errors which arose and threatened to wipe away those things which signified its transcendental value. Their solution would be to prove the Virgin birth of Jesus, the Incarnation of the Son of God, was fundamental and has led us to this celebration today, January 1, the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God.