

HOM Mary, the Holy Mother of God 2023 A Jan 1

To emphatically make a point, the late Fr. Benedict Groeschel, in a talk he gave on the first six ecumenical councils of the Church – that had to do with “who Jesus” is -- set up his students with a series of leading questions that went something like this:

*Jesus is Son of God and Son of Man, right?* And everyone in the room nodded or said “yes.”

*And Jesus has both a divine nature and a human nature, right?* Again, all present nodded or replied “yes”

*And Jesus has two wills, one divine and one human, right?* All agree.

*And Jesus is a divine person and a human person, right?* Everybody gives the same YES response. At which Fr. Groeschel yells “NO, that’s not right! Jesus is not a human person. He has a human nature but he is a divine person. He is one person – a divine person with two natures, one divine and one human.”

That is a dogmatic teaching, and the faith of the Church, and it is the reason the Church rightly calls Mary, the Mother of God. It is because she is the Mother of Jesus, who is a divine person -- God.

That Jesus is God is perfectly clear from Sacred Scripture. This was also carefully defined by the Church at the Council of Nicaea in 325 against the Arian heresy which falsely claimed that Jesus was more than human, but less than God. From this Council came the Nicene Creed, which declares that Jesus is “*God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father, through Him all things were made.*” It was the Council of Ephesus in 431, however, that declared that the title THEOTOKOS or God-bearer befits Mary because she is the Mother of Jesus who is a divine person – the second person of the Most Holy Trinity -- God. Hence, we celebrate Mary as the Mother of God.

On this New Year’s Eve / Day on which Church also celebrates the Solemnity of Mary the Holy Mother of God, perhaps the more important consideration is not HOW IS IT THAT MARY IS TITLED MOTHER OF GOD, but rather, why is a holyday for Mary under this title celebrated on the same day that the world is celebrating the passage of time.

I would suggest that it has something to do with Mary wanting every person in the world to know and love God’s Son and Hers as much as possible and as soon as possible because the acceptable time for this is now, and sooner or later that acceptable time comes to an end for every person.

Mary’s mission is to make everyone’s time meaningful and valuable unto eternal life by leading them to Jesus -- like the shepherds who were summoned to Bethlehem by a host of angels to behold the newborn Lamb of sacrifice -- and like the Magi who were led by an angelic star to the manger to offer gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the infant king, priest, and victim, in preparation for offering the gift of themselves to Him and with Him to the Father.

Yes, to those who do not profess faith in Jesus, Mary is working to lead them, like the shepherds and the Magi, in some way, to communion with Her Son, even if it is only at the moment of death, at their particular judgment. She is working to make Muslims and Hindus and Buddhists and Jews and Shintoists, and atheists and agnostics – more than 5.5 billion people -- ready to meet Jesus in judgment, with a willingness to consent to His offer of oneness with Himself in doing the Father’s will unto the Cross of obedience and love that opens the way to sharing in His divine glory in heaven in the communion of life and love of the Most Holy Trinity.

And to those who do profess faith in Jesus and are members of His Mystical Body, the Church, by way of Baptism, Mary is working to bring their baptismal oneness with the Lord to full, nuptial oneness by way of Holy Communion and Eucharistic Self-Offering. This corresponds to Her own oneness with God that

began with Her Immaculate Conception, and was made more complete at the Annunciation with her deliberate, free, unreserved, and formal consent to God's love and His will. Her self-offering was then brought to perfection at Calvary where she offered Her Son to the Father for the life of the world, and herself with Him. This nuptial oneness with the Father, and unto the Cross of obedience and love with Jesus, was then consummated as she entered into the glory of the Father's House with Jesus at her Assumption into Heaven.

Brothers and sisters, Mary is also depending on us to win others for Her Son by our self-offering for them with Jesus, and thus communicating to them the grace of the Holy Spirit poured out to us in overflowing abundance. Some of these people are baptized who have fallen away from the sacraments and Church. Some are members of our own families or they are our friends.

One night, I was dealing with some light pain in my hip and I could not find a comfortable way to lay in bed. Without my asking, the Lord seemed to give me the reason for this. As I thought about my Eucharistic Self-Offering, the words "*atone for sins*" and "*save souls*" came to mind.

We can all do that. Most people have some pain to endure from time to time, or some arduous work to do, that can be offered *to atone for sins* and *to save souls*.

Think of how fruitful 2023 could be for eternal life if we all did just that much. After all, the pain and the work will be there for us one way or another. All we have to do to make it fruitful for heaven – for self and others – is to deliberately offer it up in oneness with Jesus on the Cross, thus renewing our Eucharistic Self-Offering and being more fully united and conformed to Him in His Self-Offering.

You younger people who are here, even you very young children who are present, you probably do not have aches and pains yet to offer to God with Jesus, but one small voluntary sacrifice every day can help you and others get to heaven. By this you will make the New Year blessed for yourself and your family and friends, and you will please Jesus and our Blessed Mother.

As we begin this New Year, then, let's all make or renew a Eucharistic Self-Offering for the salvation of all the willing. If we pray these words silently and sincerely at Holy Communion and live them out, we will grow rich in what matters most: I AM ALL YOURS O MOST LOVING JESUS THROUGH MARY YOUR MOTHER WITH THE HELP OF ST. JOSEPH.