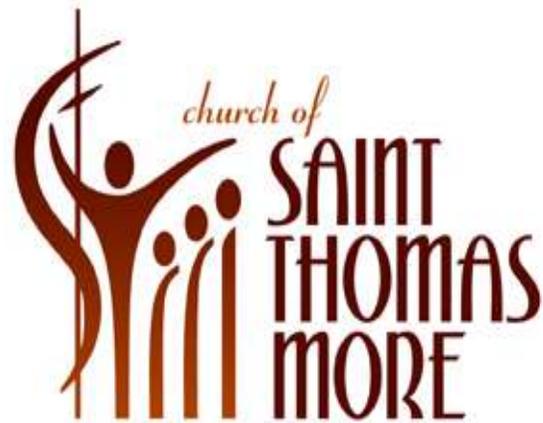


January 1 – Mary Mother of God

How fitting it is that on New Year's Day, a day of new beginnings, the dawn of a new year, we should celebrate Mary, complete with a title of great honor: "The Mother of God."

The title comes to us from the greeting Mary received when she visited her cousin Elizabeth: "And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1: 43).



The official dogma of Mary as "the Mother of God" did not come until the fifth century, when the Council of Ephesus met in 431 to resolve a controversy that arose when a Bishop named Nestorius claimed that Mary could be called "Mother of Christ" but not "Mother of God", because he believed there was a distinction of the human and divine in Jesus. The Council of Ephesus condemned Nestorius and affirmed the subsistence of the divine and human as one person in Jesus, and proclaimed Mary the Mother of God.

In his encyclical *Marialis Cultus* (1974) Pope Paul VI wrote:

"This celebration, assigned to January 1 in conformity with the ancient liturgy of the city of Rome, is meant to commemorate the part played by Mary in this mystery of salvation. It is meant also to exalt the singular dignity which this mystery brings to the 'holy Mother... through whom we were found worthy to receive the Author of life'. It is likewise a fitting occasion for renewed adoration of the newborn Prince of Peace, for listening once more to the glad tidings of the angels, and for imploring from God, through the Queen of Peace, the supreme gift of peace.

For this reason... we have instituted the World Day of Peace, an observance that is gaining increasing support and is already bringing forth fruits of peace in the hearts of many."

It is so very fitting that on the day which inaugurates a new year, the day which honors Mary as Mother of God, that we continue to pray for peace in our world. That would truly be a new beginning.

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