

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.

Peter, at a New Year's party, turns to his friend, Ken, and asks for a cigarette. 'I thought you made a New Year's resolution to quit smoking,' Ken responds. 'I'm in the process of quitting,' replies Peter with a grin. 'Right now, I am in the middle of phase one.'

'Phase one?' wonders Ken. 'Yeah,' laughs Peter, 'I've quit buying.'

Dear Friends,

We are in the new year 2023. I wish you all a happy and prosperous New Year. May God bring success and peace to all of us and around the world. They are still talking about Covid. Let us pray that people are safe and able to make their lives secure and peaceful.

On the first day of the new year, we are celebrating the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. It is one of the ancient feasts that we remember in the church. This is an occasion to renew our devotion to Mary, who is also Mother of the Church because she is our spiritual mother — and we are the Church.

In 1970, Pope Paul VI instituted the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. In his encyclical on devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, "Marialis Cultus", he wrote, "This celebration, assigned to Jan. 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." The solemnity shows the relationship of Jesus to Mary. It's a perfect example of how we should venerate Mary under all of her titles and is a good foundation for our understanding of Mary's place in Christology.

Today's readings give a blessing for the new year. In the first reading from the Book of Numbers, God gives his blessings to us. This invocation brings us his face shining upon us and being gracious to us and bringing peace.

Today as we focus on Mary, I want you to reflect on these two questions? Who is this woman? Who is this woman to me?

For the first question, we all know that this woman is Mary, the mother of Jesus who is fully human and fully divine. As today's gospel explained, she is faithful to God and as well as faithful to her responsibilities as Jewish mother. God has communicated with her in a special way, beginning with her own Immaculate Conception and continuing through The birth of Jesus.

The second question is to be reflected today among many Catholics. Who is this woman to me? The answer depends on how we develop a relationship with this person and how much we care for this person and her love.

Mother Mary is different for each one of us. She is an intercessor, a mother, a mediator and so on. What this person is to you depends on you, on your own care for her and commitment to her. We will discover our right relationship to Mary if we ask ourselves the question Elizabeth asked: "Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

Most Popes over the centuries have commented on Mary. Her role in the church and the world is bigger than we think, especially in crucial times, she has been interceding for the world starting from the wedding at Cana until today. Let us also love her and ask her intercession for our families and pray to her.