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Homily for the Solemnity of Mary – Mother of God  
Numbers 6:22-27; Ps 67; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21  
2018-01-01  
St. Eugenia Catholic Church, Stockholm (English Mass)

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

When another year has passed, most of us can establish, some with more pain and sorrow than others, how little we control and dispose of our time, our happiness and our misfortune. Thus, we realise how provisional our plans, expectations and endeavours are. But if we try to live in the present tense of God, we will, stepwise, in time, approach that, which God has intended for each one of us. This is the only sustainable recipe for happiness. Not in form of ecstatic feelings, but of an inner peace, visible from outside, coming from the awareness that my life ultimately isn't dependent on my achievements or limitations; a peace built on the promise that God always walks with us.

For this reason, the Church wants us to put our new year, 2018, in our Blessed Virgin Mary's tender, caring hands of perpetual intercession. Through her, God became man in Jesus Christ to share all with us, except from sin but definitely the ultimate consequence of our sins, to enable us to share all with him, i.e. eternal life with God starting already now.

The one who Virgin Mary conceived through Holy Spirit, the one who really became her son of the flesh, is the eternal Son of the Father, i.e. the second person of the Blessed Trinity. Therefore, Virgin Mary is not only called the Mother of Jesus, but also the Mother of God: "Theotokos", "bearer of God" in Greek – a title given her at the third ecumenical council of Ephesus in the year of 431.

Everything that the Catholic Church, alongside with the orthodox churches, believes and teaches about Virgin Mary, is a necessary consequence of that which she believes and teaches about God's incarnation in Jesus Christ. The Blessed Virgin makes the Christian faith complete. This was in fact confirmed by the Atheist 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach, who once said that when faith in the Mother of God diminishes, also faith in God's Son and God the Father will diminish. Empirically, he was proven right. In those parts of the Christian cultural sphere where secularism today is strongest, Virgin Mary was thrown out of faith and devotion hundreds of years ago.

Christian faith is that God is the cause of all causes, and the guarantor of all causations that exist in the world. He is not a cause himself, but the one making causes possible. If we can't believe that our Blessed Virgin, by a divine intervention, was freed from original sin already at her conception – i.e. what we call the Immaculate Conception of Virgin Mary – then we can't believe that God alone made the cause of his incarnation possible. Because only totally free from the inclination to put herself before God, Virgin Mary could say her "yes".

If we can't believe that Mary gave birth to Jesus as a virgin, we deny that matter would belong to God. And if matter wouldn't belong to God, God wouldn't be God. And we would have no hope. All sin, evil, darkness and deficiencies we see around us would have the last word in eternity.

Christian faith is to believe that the reception of God's salvation in Jesus Christ transforms the human by partaking in divine life; a transformation noticeable already in time and space. If we can't believe that Virgin Mary remained virgin throughout her entire life and was saved from the decomposition of the grave at her death – i.e. what we call the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin – we can't believe that God's salvation through Christ transforms us and makes us to a new creation to body and soul, as we then wouldn't need to be transformed in God's eyes. And then, we ourselves would be already perfect and thus in fact gods, which indeed would be idolatry; an idolatry leading only to hopelessness. Because we are no gods, sin and suffering, sooner or later arriving in our lives, would finally define us. And we would meet yet another year in fear.

In today's gospel, Virgin Mary gives us the role model of living out of trust in God's plans, although not fully understood or not yet even known at all to us. To treasure and ponder holy things in our heart, as she did – a formulation indicating that the Blessed Virgin herself would be the source of St. Luke's childhood stories – is to define our persons by God's will as revealed in Jesus Christ, and taught and explained by his Church, instituted by Christ to carry forth the Incarnation everywhere and at all times; God's will and not our own.

As Christians, God's blessing of us uncovering his face to us, as stated in our first reading today from the Book of Numbers, unites us into one, new, covenantal family; one new Israel, linked not by blood but by something stronger: God's grace. And not just symbolically or rhetorically, but truly; through the teaching and the sacraments of the Church.

This was what moved St. Paul to tell the Galatians, in our second reading today, that God's Son was "born of a woman" so that all of us, through faith in him, could receive adoption as sons and daughters of God. Everyone who has been baptized into Christ has become his brother or sister. In Christ everyone – no matter their age, gender or race – can call God "Father" and Mary "Mother", just as Christ does.

Let us all share one clear New Year resolution: that the year ahead of us will bring us closer to Christ, so that we can bring all those we relate to closer to him; that we will listen to God's call to let him renew us, so that we won't live this year as last year, but instead meet him, and those he sends in our way, more profoundly. Let us therefore ask for the protection of the intercessions of our Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God and therefore the Mother of the Church and of all us believers, and who is always with her son; and let us pray for more of her attitude of trust in God's plan whatever it will be; that attitude expressed by the responsorial psalm's acclamation: "God, be gracious and bless us". So that we might be more able to treasure and ponder in our heart the coming of Jesus Christ, as he soon, most amazingly, gives himself to us in the new, eternal Bethlehem of the Holy Eucharist. Amen.