

FIRST JANUARY 2017: MARY THE MOTHER OF GOD

Today, we celebrate the solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

After having honored the Son at Christmas, the church has chosen this day to acknowledge the role of Mary in the wonderful miracle of the Incarnation and to praise Mary for the love she bestowed on Jesus and her total faithfulness to him.

The title “Mother of God” reminds us that Mary was an essential part of God’s plan of salvation. In the second reading St Paul writes, **“When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman,”--In the words of the Nicene Creed “Incarnate of the Virgin Mary” —“born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoptions as sons.”**

As we start the New Year: 2017, we cannot help but asking ourselves some questions: What has this New Year in store for me? Am I going to win any target I have set for myself? Will it bring me joy or sorrow? Shall I see the end of it?

We do not have answers to these and many questions we ask at the beginning of every year. Only God has the answers to them. God reveals his plans to us gradually. We only have to work hard, to do our part and accept whatever comes to us in good faith.

Tai Solari, one of the Nigeria’s foremost social activists wrote an article which was published in Daily Times Newspaper of January 1st 1964 under the title **“May your road be rough”**.

The first paragraph of the article reads, **“May your road be rough I am not cursing you; I am wishing you what I wish myself every year. I therefore repeat, may you have a hard time this year, may there be plenty of troubles for you this year! If you are not sure what you should say back why not just say same to you? I ask for no more.”**

The lesson I learned from reading the article way back in my secondary school days was that life is full of challenges, hills and vales, up and downs but by determination and hard work we will achieve our targets, we will succeed, we will overcome our difficulties. So we should never give up.

This is the message I would like to share with you at the beginning of this New Year. Yes, the future is unknown to us but as Christians we must continue to work hard and make use of the grace of God as we seek to uncover what God has in store for us. We should not allow the challenges in this life to dampen our spirit, to reduce our willingness to do what is right; what is expected of us, to lose faith in God.

There is an interesting detail in the gospel of today which will help us to understand God's ways in uncovering his plans for us. When the shepherds saw the child, they repeated what they had been told about him and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds had to say. As for Mary she kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.

For Mary there was something new in what the shepherds had to say. She certainly knew about Jesus more than others but she was far from knowing everything about God's plans for him. The point is, Mary would have to find out God's plans for Jesus the way we also have to discover God's plans for us through the daily events in life, through hard work, through the people among whom we live and through humble prayer.

In short, let us be attentive at all times to discover God's plans and carry them out faithfully.

May the Lord bless us and keep us. May his face shine upon us and be gracious to us. And may he look upon us kindly and give us peace in every situation we find ourselves in the course of the Year.

Happy New Year to you all!