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Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

God had a Mom!

This idea that even God had a mom has always amused me and bemused me. As a child, I used to think of Jesus--if when he was a high school student at Hebrew High did used to get miffed at *his* mother's voice as she screeched for him to get up out of bed, lest he be late for school. I wondered if she complained about the way he dressed or his choice of hair style. Did Jesus' Mom have this habit of repeating herself thousands of times, when he heard her the first time? Did she have all of those sayings that he would need therapy for as an adult because he is now actually tempted to say them, for no doubt he is thinking them. How did Jesus respond to Mary's possible interference as he picked his friends? I can't imagine that she like his hanging out with those undereducated fishermen. After all, her son had to do math as a carpenter's apprentice. And, did she say, "I told you so!" when she realized that they were betraying him?

God had a Mom!

As an adult and priest, I am humbled by this. The savior of the world, the redeemer of humanity had a Mom; he wasn't dropped from the sky. He didn't emerge from magic. He came from a womb and was raised by a man and woman who, no doubt, struggled like any parent without a parenting manual, in raising their child.

God having a Mom is not just a novel idea or a neat concept. It is the master plan of our loving God. When our God, intelligent designer that God is, created our Savior to have a Mom, he set in motion one of the most important dimensions of creation: God put himself in our hands. God rested in the arms of a man and a woman, like the countless children who were born throughout the history of our world. God still rest in our arms, for our loving God continues to trust the divinity that is within each person into the arms of people, whether parents or caretakers. People hold people. How well do we hold each other? How well do we hold and respect the divinity of all of the people God created?

Today, we pray at the beginning of a new year that we are called to hold each other in peace.

The history of today's celebration of both Mary, Mother of God, and World Day of Peace are important for us as humans, as Christians, and as parishioners of Our Lady Queen of Peace.

In the early 1940s when Bishop Peter L. Ireton gave a group of women the privilege of naming their new church, there was no question as to what it would be. These African American Moms traveled everyday to DC, to a church where they were welcome, to pray the rosary for the safe return of their sons from WWII. They prayed through the intercession of Our Lady Queen of Peace, and all of their sons returned home safely. Thus, this parish got its name.

Some thirty years later, the bishop of Rome, Pope Paul VI, wrote an encyclical letter, *Marialis Cultus*, in which he dedicated January 1 as the date to honor Mary as the Mother of God. He wrote: “This celebration is meant to commemorate the part played by Mary in this mystery of salvation. It is 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 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” (no. 5).

And more than 30 years after this, another bishop of Rome, Pope Benedict XVI, wrote his first letter for today’s World Day of Peace. It is astounding, dare I say for two reasons. First, in the very first sentence he addresses not world leaders, not his brother bishops, but those who suffer from violence and war. In the very first sentence. Second, as we know this pope is a very learned man who writes with a deep philosophical style that doesn’t always appeal to folks like you and me. But on the topic of something so important as world peace, he offers something that made me simply stop and question my role in bringing peace to our world. Of course, he offers thoughts on peace that appeal to those men and women of great power who are influential in the world’s politics. Yet, he says that the greatest threat to peace in the world is one that we all have control over. He suggests that lying is the source of the lack of peace. When people ignore, don’t tell, or deceive the truth, tragic, earth-shaking things happen. I think he is right. We have the power to reclaim that peace of our own worlds. It may sound like a pipe-dream, that truth-telling could bring about peace. But it is no more a pipe dream than peace itself.

Our hearts yearn for peace. Our children deserve it. And, our world needs it. People who worship the Prince of Peace at this great Church of Our Lady Queen of Peace are committed to peace. But it must start here, one person at a time, one relationship at a time, each calling forth the truth that is Jesus. Well before he said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” he cried in a manger, and we all worship him. The holy infant, prince of peace is calling us to build a world of peace by telling and living the truth.

Imagine how much more peaceful our world would be if everyone spoke and lived the truth, communicated in gentleness and reassured in love.

Joseph, husband of Mary, may have felt like a failure for not being able to secure a better place for his wife to give birth. I trust he was truthful and risked to share that with his wife. Mary may have had her doubts in her post-partum expressions of fear that Joseph really believed she was not unfaithful to him in the conception of Jesus. I hope she expressed her fears in truth. We can, too. Whether with at home or at work or with our friends, peace only happens with the truth, even the truth about our insecurities and failures. Paul VI’s saying, “If you want peace work for justice” is not just a bumper sticker. It is a commitment, for justice happens only with the truth.

To speak and live the truth could be more than a New Year’s Resolution. It could be a New Year Revolution! Brought to us from the grace of God!

This is our Feast Day, Our Lady Queen of Peace. Let's make it last all year long. Happy New Year!