

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Solemnity of Mary, Octave Day of Christmas, Dec. 31, 2018 – Jan. 1, 2019, Cycle C

I would say even most Catholics think of Christmas as being one holy day and New Year's Day as being another, a separate holy day commemorating the New Year. However, January 1st is a Holy Day for the Church not because we want to get the new civil year off on the right foot. No, we Catholic-Christians gather this day to celebrate the Octave or Eighth Day of Christmas. The rejoicing of December 25th belongs to January 1st as well. We come to celebrate the Eucharist on January 1st to continue our unfolding of and pondering over the multifaceted Mystery of Christmas. This day we celebrate the mystery of Mary's motherhood of God; that through Mary's "Yes," God's very Word became flesh. We also reflect on what Mary's motherhood of God means for our lives as Christians.

For though the mystery of Mary's motherhood of the Son of God does say something about Mary; Mary's motherhood of God also says something to and about us as we enter into the New Year as followers of Jesus.

First of all, we celebrate not only Mary's motherhood of God in Jesus, but also Mary's motherhood of the Church. Jesus is the head of the Church, we are the body, and when Mary gave birth to Jesus the head, she gave birth to the Church. The Church springs forth from Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. In the mystery of Mary's motherhood of God in Jesus our humanity has been graced to share a communion with God's life as intimately as Christ shared communion with human life. Through Mary's "yes" to God's will, the Divine became human and the human became divine. The Church comes to be. We as followers of Jesus come to be!

Thus, the mystery of Mary's motherhood of God does not end with her; no, mothering the divine into the world is a mystery that involves all of us who are the Church. As the Divine presence came forth from Mary into the world, so, because of our baptism, the divine presence lives in us now as the Church. It is our task to follow Mary in saying "Yes" to God's will, so the divine presence will continue to be mothered or continually born into the world.

The Church's mothering of the Divine presence into the world, making Jesus real in the world is a great mystery; and like Mary we need to ponder and reflect on this mystery in our hearts through prayer. We need stillness of hearts and quiet prayer to understand fully the mystery we are being called to participate in. However, also, like Mary we are called not only to be people of contemplation, but people of action who say "Yes" to mothering the presence of God into the world.

On this Octave Day of Christmas, as we are on the threshold of entering a new calendar year. The Church offers us the Mother of God as our model to imitate throughout this New Year – as we strive to be true bearers of the Word made Flesh into the World.