

This time of year many of us make resolutions for the coming year. A son recalls: *Last year when I called my parents to wish them a happy New Year, my dad answered the phone. "Well, Dad, what's your New Year's resolution?" I asked him. "To make your mother as happy as I can all year," he answered proudly. Then mom got on, and I said, "What's your resolution, Mom?" "To see that your dad keeps his New Year's resolution."*

The late Erma Bombeck's memorable resolutions:

1. I will go to no doctor whose office plants have died.
2. I'm going to follow my husband's suggestion to put a little excitement into my life by living within our budget.
3. I'm going to apply for a hardship scholarship to Weight Watchers.
4. I will never loan my car to anyone I have given birth to... Though I suspect the Mother of God would do so and in fact did so, as she gave us the key to Eternal life in her Son Jesus the Christ.

We begin the New Year walking in with the Mother of God – not a bad way to start.

+Monsignor Arthur Tonne tells the story of a Catholic pastor in a small Alabama city of mostly Southern Baptist Christians who decided to put up a Christmas crib in the town square. The priest with some of his prominent parishioners approached some wealthy people and businesses for donations. When they went to see the rich editor of the local newspaper the priest explained the project:

“Many people, especially the children will be inspired to see Jesus, Mary and Joseph and animals right here in the center of the town.” The editor agreed to help on condition that Mary must be left out. “Otherwise, it would be promoting your Catholic denomination.”

The priest said: “Tell you what. Tell me how you can show a birth without a mother, and I will agree to leave Mary out.” The editor had no answer and the Mother was with her Child in the town square.

We honor Mary primarily because God honored her by choosing her to become the mother of Jesus, God honored her – it wasn't like she won the lottery – God chose her because there never would be anyone like her.

To answer any prejudice, our understanding of Mary depends totally upon our understanding of her Son. Everything about her flows from her being Christ's mother; as our understanding of Him grows, our understanding of her grows.

+Perhaps at a New Year's party you might have found yourself getting caught up in this feast, calling out at Mid-night...”Go Mary Go! Go Mother of God, Go!” But afterward, there is a silence as one asks, “How can you call her the Mother of God? God was not born! God is forever.” Well, my hope is I can help you with an answer to such a question.

For any of this to take place, of course Mary had to say yes, as God does not force anything upon us. Mary's "yes" was not muffled consent that led her to a joyful pregnancy, filled with adoring friends and sweet baby showers. Her life instantly became a cascade of gossip and drama, as we

can only imagine how she explained her pregnancy in such a culture. Just imagine the response to her, “It was God!”

Once she said yes, the Holy Spirit created in her womb the human nature that God the Son would assume. Since motherhood is of the person and not of the nature alone, and since Mary is the mother of Jesus, true God and true Man, then she is rightly called the Mother of God. He was not born a human and then God jumped in. No, it started with her yes.

In his divine nature Jesus had existed eternally. But conversely, his human nature he owed to Mary as much as any man owes his human nature to his mother. There is nothing that makes my mother mine which is lacking in her relation to him as man. She was mother, as yours or mine is, of the person born of her. And the Person was God the Son. I suspect some may have surmised, “He has your face Mary, but his Father’s eyes.”

Or perhaps we might just respond to such a question with, “It’s a mystery” and be done with it! In her yes, Mary not only became the Mother of God, but our Mother, as well.

As Jesus is dying on the cross, he looks upon his mother and the disciple John, and says, “Woman, behold your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” (John 19:26) John represents all of us and thus Mary as our Mother. Jesus gave us his Mother so that she would be the Mother of all humanity.

We know that the Virgin Mary is the Mother of Jesus Christ and, consequently, the Mother of God. But she is also the Mother of the Church, which is this mystical Body of Christ gathered this day. Because of this, the mission of Mary is totally inseparable from the mission of the Church.

And it should be clearly stated that the role of Mary, as Mother of all humanity, in no way eclipses or diminishes Christ. On the contrary, her role can only help to clarify Christ’s role. This is one of the reasons God decided to share his Mother with us.

Everyone’s prayers can help others, but the holier, the more so. With Christ and in Christ we are all called upon in the work of redemption. All are meant to have a part, but Mary above all; for she was sinless; she was wholly love and her whole life was a yes to God.

I close with this illustration, as it captures Mary’s love for her children and will always seek us out.

+In a remote section of the Andes, a highland tribe attacked a lowland tribe. In doing so, the highlanders kidnapped a lowland baby and took the child back to their mountain stronghold. Many were sent out from the lowland tribe to get the child, but all failed, as they could not scale the mountain. Finally, they had to admit defeat, as it was hopeless.

As they began their return, they saw coming from the heights a figure of a mother carrying the precious child she had lost – coming down the mountain they had been unable to climb. They asked the mother, “How were you able to do that, to rescue the child, while everyone else failed. The mother smiled and said simply, “Because it wasn’t your child.”