

*Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God—Year A*  
*“Mother of God, Mother of the Eucharist”*

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## **Through the Words of the Gospel, May Our Sins be Wiped Away**

### **Holy Spirit, Help Me to Preach with Great Clarity and Great Charity**

Along with his cousin Lucia and his younger sister Jacinta, Francisco was blessed to have been chosen as one of the three shepherd children who our Lady visited during her apparitions in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. So impressed was Francisco by the messages Mary conveyed to the children that, at only the tender age of nine years old, he developed a devotion to what he called “the hidden Jesus,” Jesus hidden in the Eucharist. It was not uncommon to find Francisco in the local parish, oftentimes when he should have been in school, praying to comfort and console Jesus and our Lady for the sins of the world. Lucia tells us that Francisco’s favorite place to pray was behind the altar at the foot of the tabernacle so that he could be as physically close as possible to Jesus in the most Blessed Sacrament. When asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, Francisco answered, *“I don’t want to be anything. I want to die and go to heaven.”*

On this first day of the secular new year, Holy Mother Church in her wisdom asks us to reflect on one of the most sublime mysteries of our faith. God lovingly took on flesh, a human body. He did so for two purposes. First, so that He could suffer in that body for our redemption and allow us the opportunity to achieve our eternal salvation. And second, so that He could remain with us after He had

ascended to Heaven in the Eucharist, which is the infinite God Himself. We open the year with a blessing, “*The LORD bless you and keep you! The LORD let His face shine upon you...*” and in Jesus Christ, the face of God, that is exactly what He does each time we cast our gaze upon Him in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

The Eucharist is the cause of our joy in this life because it is the guaranteed means to heaven, provided we receive Him worthily and allow the grace of the Eucharist to lead us to lives of holiness. But it is also our joy in that we are able to reflect on the greatest love story ever told. And because this love story involves almighty God there is no end to what we can reflect upon and ponder. This is the love story between the Holy Trinity and the Blessed Virgin Mary. From all eternity God had chosen the woman who would be at the same time spouse, daughter and mother in the Holy Trinity. Mary was all of these at the same time from all eternity in the heart and mind of almighty God. She was the spouse of the Holy Spirit, she was the daughter of the Father and she was the Mother of the Son. No creature could ever be destined for as high an honor because of that level of intimacy with the Holy Trinity. Her total and complete holiness and the fulfillment of her eternal destiny makes her the most perfect of all Christians—and our everlasting model. No other creature is as blessed as she.

The Holy Trinity comes to Mary at Nazareth—the Father sends the angel Gabriel, the Holy Spirit overshadows her and the Son goes into her womb and she

becomes the Ark of the New Covenant—housing not just the written word, but the very Word Himself. Mary actually becomes a living tabernacle—the holiest tabernacle ever in the history of the world. She says “Yes” at Nazareth to the angel and God Himself takes flesh in her womb from her flesh and is now present in her womb. The entire cycle of the love of the Trinity and the Blessed Virgin Mary is made complete there at Nazareth. The Father created her as daughter, the Holy Spirit joined Himself to her as spouse and the Son comes to her womb as Son. As St. Paul tells us today, “*When the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.*” In all of his writings, this is Paul’s sole mention of the Virgin Mary. Understanding the implications of what the Holy Spirit taught through Paul, our early Church Fathers, at the Council of Ephesus in the year 431, pronounced Mary to be “*theotokos,*” the “*God-bearer,*” or as we know it in English, the “*Mother of God.*” Jesus was God from the moment of His conception, and Mary was God’s mother.

It is because of this relationship that Christ, hanging on the Cross 33 years later and thinking back to Eden, can look down from the Cross, gaze into His tearful mother’s eyes and say, “I am the bone of your bone and the flesh of your flesh.” And the most sorrowful mother who ever lived can look at her Son and say, “Yes, Son, you are the flesh of my flesh and the bone of my bone.”

Without Mary there would be no Incarnation. Without the Incarnation, there would be no redemption and there would be no Eucharist. Because of Mary the Incarnation continues to this day and will continue until the end of time in the Eucharist. Through the order of grace, Mary knew this sublime truth and so she was able to declare, “...*all generations will call me blessed.*” And indeed the Catholic Church began to do so and will never cease praising Mary because every human soul in Heaven owes a debt of gratitude to Mary for her “Yes.” Because we cannot get there without Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross—which He could not have done without His Body—which He would not have had had Mary not said “Yes” to becoming the Mother of God.

But that “Yes” of Mary’s would come with a price. For she too was crucified as she stood at the foot of the Cross in torment watching her Son go through that death. Jesus wanted Mary to enter into His agony to the fullest extent possible so that His faithful followers could be entrusted to her. So from the Cross we hear Christ say to His Mother, “*Woman, behold, your son!*” John, the beloved disciple, is the model of the Church and each one of us. Christ, in His moments of incredible suffering and despair, gives over to us His own Mother.

After He ascended to Heaven, Mary prayed with the first Christians—His Apostles, their converts, their disciples, their little community—the Holy Catholic Church in its nascent little form right there in the Upper Room. Think about the first

moment she received her Son in the Eucharist. No one in all of history ever received the Eucharist as perfectly as Mary. She had become the Mother of all believers and all of the people they would reach throughout the history of the world because they carried her Son in them also. Because of Mary, the Trinity comes to all the faithful believers in the Eucharist. Mary's "Yes" in Nazareth is re-echoed each time faithful Catholics walk up and stand before the Eucharistic presence of our Lord before they receive Him and say "Amen"—her "Fiat," our "Amen." This is the relationship between our Lady and her Son Jesus in the Eucharist. Mary shares her Son with us in the Eucharist—she gives us her Son. When you approach and you receive the Eucharist, the flesh of Jesus that you are eating came from Mary because from all eternity the Holy Trinity willed it so. This led St. John Paul II to joyfully teach us, *"Mary is present, with the Church and as the Mother of the Church, at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist. If the Church and the Eucharist are inseparably united, the same ought to be said of Mary and the Eucharist."*

At the Last Supper our Blessed Lord said, *"Do this in remembrance of Me."* The last words recorded in Sacred Scripture of our Blessed Mother are, *"Do whatever He tells you."* Mary is our Mother precisely because she was first the Mother of God, precisely because she was first the Mother of the Eucharist. Because of the sacrifice made by the Son born of a woman, St. Paul tells us we are no longer slaves but sons, and if sons then also heirs through God. Let us recognize Mother

Mary as the priceless gift of our inheritance as God's adopted sons that she truly is. With the Christmas shepherds, let us go with haste to Mother Mary with the firm knowledge that she always points to God and leads all peoples in praising Him.

St. Hilary of Poitiers proclaims, *"No matter how sinful one may have been, if he has devotion to Mary, it is impossible that he be lost."* It is in the love and guidance of Mother Mary that God blesses and keeps us. It is in the love and guidance of Mother Mary that God's face and graciousness shine upon us. It is in the love and guidance of Mother Mary that God looks kindly upon us and gives us peace. So as the Year of Our Lord 2023 dawns, let us each embrace the love and the guidance that the Mother of God wants to lavish upon each one of us. If you already have devotion to Our Lady, allow her to more firmly grasp you by the hands and lead you closer to her Son. If you do not have such devotion, let now be the time—run to Mary, consecrate yourself and those you love to her Immaculate Heart, and be prepared to let her lead you to holiness. We are her children, and if we follow her example over the next fifty-two weeks, she will lead us in all things to Jesus.

*"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, He has spoken to us through the Son."* Let each of us allow Jesus to speak to our hearts and with great joy let us receive His words, *"Behold, your Mother!"*

In August 1918, less than a year after the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima had ended, Francisco contracted the Spanish flu, which raged across the globe as World War I was coming to an end. The following April, realizing that his desire to go to heaven was approaching, Francisco asked to receive the Hidden Jesus for the first time in Holy Communion. The very next morning, April 4, 1919, with what witnesses described as a glow on his shrunken face, Francisco said to his mother, *“Mother, look at that lovely light by the door!”* It was a sign that our Lady, as she always does, was coming to take her little Francisco to Jesus, and he peacefully died. Through the intercession of Saint Francisco Marto, may we do as he did and allow Blessed Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Eucharist, and our mother, to lead us to—and help us grow in love with—the Hidden Jesus, present in all the tabernacles throughout the world.