

+ J. M. J.

For a couple of weeks we have been reading about or watching the events that have taken place over the course of the past ten years. You might say today is a day when the Church gets a little nostalgic, not about the events of the past year or the past ten years, but about what happened at the end of the forty-third decade.

The people were fond of referring to the Blessed Mother as the Mother of God in their prayers and devotion. Well, a new bishop was consecrated as the Bishop of Constantinople. This bishop with great zeal immediately began going after and correcting all those who were preaching incorrect doctrine. When he told the people they could no longer refer to Mary as Mother of God there was a huge uproar. There was an appeal to the pope and later the third ecumenical council was held over this issue. Is Mary the Mother of God?

Because the solemnity today is called Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, you can guess the outcome. It might seem silly to get all wrapped up about such terminology, but I assure you of the importance of this. We know that Mary gave Jesus his human nature. Some of the mystics have said that Jesus bore a striking resemblance to his mother. The Gospel tells us Jesus advanced in wisdom and age (Luke 2:52). He at times was tired (cf. John 4:6). At the onset of his passion he was so stressed that he sweat blood (Luke 22:44). Clearly these are marks of Jesus' humanity. He also worked miracles, healing people and walking on water. He knew people's thoughts, and, most importantly, he rose from the dead. Clearly Jesus was divine, but he was a single person. He wasn't human part of the time and then when he needed divine power he flipped a switch in his brain so that he could work a miracle. Certainly this is a mystery. How could Jesus at one time know everything there was to know about the universe and learn just as any schoolboy does?

There is a beautiful prayer that the priest says at Mass. "By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share our humanity." The priest or

deacon says this prayer when adding water to the wine to be consecrated. Christ doesn't just take on our human nature. He is a bridge, a mediator. Through the Holy Spirit who works through the sacraments we humans are united to God. We share in God's divinity. That is our destiny in the kingdom of heaven. All of this happened when Jesus' divinity and humanity were united in his one person. Because Jesus is one person and Jesus is God we can say that Mary, his mother, is the Mother of God.

As we meditate on Jesus bringing us all into relationship with God we can't help but realize that if we all participate in this close union there is a bond that exists between each and every one of us as the body of Christ, and if Jesus is the Prince of peace, it is fitting and right to refer to Mary, the Mother of God, as the Queen of Peace. Today then we also celebrate the World Day of Peace, and each year the pope has a message for the entire world of how to bring about that peace of Christ. This year Pope Benedict has asked us to reflect on our sharing of the world and all its resources. We affirm the good that it is to own things and to make our world better through labor, but at the same time we know that nobody owns the earth. Creation is not something to be exploited; rather it is a gift to be shared among the members of the Body of Christ and for future generations. Part of peace then is making sure that we are responsible in our use of the world's goods. The pope repeatedly calls us to reflect on his message "If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation." It is something worthy of prayer. Really everything that we do is a moral action. Our every action either draws us closer to God and builds up humanity, the Body of Christ, or it distances us from God and from one another. We then reflect whether or not we consider God's creation in the choices we make or if we have not or worse if we through negligence have been wasteful of the gifts that we have been given.

This morning let us begin our new year by reflecting on that mystery of who Jesus is in God taking on our human nature. Then as we consider the union we have with God and by extension that we have with

one another let us pray about how we may build the unity here on earth that we are destined to enjoy through Jesus for all eternity.

Merry Christmas, happy New Year, and may God bless you!