

Homily
December 31, 2024
Mary Mother of God
12:00 – 49:41

Over the years in my life, this particular celebration has had three focuses. Or if you're going to be really true to Latin, "foci."

One we heard in the Gospel: the Circumcision of the Lord. It's the celebration of the Eighth Day when a boy is circumcised in the Covenant of Moses. It's a very important day. Today they call it, "briss." It's a very important celebration for the family.

The second was a "world day of peace," which flows out of the First Reading. Pope Paul VI declared this a day to remember, throughout the world, the need for peace. And we know we still need that very, very much.

The third is what we celebrate now, Mary the Mother of God, which we hear alluded to in the First Reading, "a man born of a virgin, born of a woman," to bring about the salvation of all people.

Each of those moments, at least in my life, have meant a great deal. And I'm sure for many of you.

Covenant. The Second Reading reminds us of our Covenant. We are adopted children. I know it uses the word, "son," but still we are adopted children, in and through the love of Christ. Mary bore Christ, Joseph adopted him, and he made us, in our baptism adopted children into the life of God. And that's still true. It's worthy of celebrating.

Peace. How many times do we hear the people of God, in the Old Testament and the New, in many different settings and many different ways, seek peace.

Peace is not an absence of conflict. Because you know, nature creates through conflict. The conflict of an artist to create something. There is a pull and tug within. Like my brother, when he used to look at a piece of wood and see within it a bowl, or a glass or something, and go find it. There is a struggle to do that.

What our ancestors sought was that interior peace which comes from reliance upon God, allowing God's fullness to reassure and comfort, and give hope.

Mary Mother of God, "Theotokos," in Greek, which means, "Theo" - God, "Tokos" - Bearer. That's where we get the word, "token." "Theotokos" – The God-bearer.

She was, as some would say, the First Tabernacle of the Christ. She points the way for us to be bearers of him in our lives. For we, too, are called to bear God to others in Christ. And whenever we gather here, we are all hoping to be better examples of that. It's not just one-off. "Oh, we did it. Now we're done." No. It's a constant pull toward that sense of holiness because we carry God with us.

And of course, Eucharist is that pinnacle moment "when we carry in our bodies the death of the Lord, that ours may be the gift of his life," as Paul would say.

We have a lot to celebrate tonight as we begin a new year, where we would hope that people do realize the Covenants to which they are called and live them out. Where we hope that God's peace would reign – first within us, in our families and communities -- that the world might see that it is possible.

And lastly, that we are all called to bear the Lord in our lives, that the world might know that Lord. This is part of what Pope Francis is trying to get us to do very clearly in this Year of Hope, which we entered on Christmas Eve.

So, a lot to begin a new year.

Now, let us stand then and proclaim the wonder of our God and the Church in our Creed.