

HOMILY, SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul

January 1, 2012

Rev. Noah J. Casey

Let us suppose for a moment that you are a tourist visiting Indianapolis for the first time. You have just left your conference at the Convention Center, and you are wondering how to find the Circle Center Mall. Glancing around for a likely person who might offer directions you see a group of teenagers, an elderly gentleman, a few other tourists and a police officer. Chances are good that you would ask the police officer. Who in your life would be the least likely to give you good news? Each of us has a few built in prejudices as to whom might offer us helpful information, good news or good directions. What we may not know is that the teenagers are on their way to a movie at the mall, the older gentleman owns a business in the mall and, on closer examination, the tourists are carrying sacks from various mall stores. Reality requires a closer more patient look!

At the time of Jesus' birth, one of the last groups who would have been considered to give good news to anyone was the shepherds. Generally, considered to be outcasts and a little "shady", it is, nonetheless, to shepherds that the good news of the Incarnation is announced, and it is this unlikely group who echo to Mary and Joseph the songs of the Angels.

In some ways, Mary herself is an unlikely proclaimer of the Incarnation. And yet, God has chosen her to be the Mother of God, a truth ratified in the Council of Ephesus in the year 431. This is her most important title. The Greek church has a term of her special role in the history of salvation. Mary is called the "*theotokos*" which means, "the God-

bearer". She indeed, brings her divine Son into this very human world. In fact, in most icons of the eastern church, the image of Mary shows her pointing to the Christ Child reminding us of His primary importance and the fact that her importance is in her unique role and relationship to her Son.

In bringing to birth our Savior, Mary demonstrates a fundamental posture so crucial to our own discipleship. It is the posture of contemplation. Many might think that contemplation is the prerogative of those in monasteries and cloisters. This is not the case. Every Christian is encouraged to cultivate a contemplative dimension of his or her prayer. As Mary has received the good news of her Son's incarnation, and pondered all these things in her heart, so, too, we are invited to spend a lifetime of pondering the meaning of the presence of Christ in our world, and live our lives accordingly.

In fact, each of us is called to be a *theotokos*, a God-bearer, to our world. No matter how unworthy we may consider ourselves to be for such a role, it is our Baptismal challenge to bring Christ's presence into our homes, our families, our work and our play.

Today, we give thanks for the model of Mary, the mother of God and our mother as well. By her prayers, we bring Christ her Son to the world and continue to announce the good news of the Incarnation.