

## **"Mary Model and Mother!"**

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She is Queen of Peace, Immaculate Conception, Lady of Guadalupe, Theotokos, the God-Bearer, not by her own power, but because God the Father saw fit to invite her into his Divine Plan. She became the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, not because she wooed him, but because he overshadowed her. *Mater Misericordia*, Mother of Mercy, because the Mercy of God is Incarnate and his name is Jesus.

Pope Francis has seen fit to call for a Jubilee year. This is extraordinary because they don't happen every year. Yet the uncommon grace of a Jubilee year is an exercise of the mercy which is available to us in the Sacraments every day. Ever since it began pouring from the Cross into the Chalices and confessionals and Fonts, the sacrifice of the Lord is sufficient to heal every ill and remove every stain.

So, if this uncommon grace is so commonly accessible, why call a Jubilee? Why a Year of Mercy? If our Lady was invited by the Father, and the invitation was so confident that there is no question mark and no querying tone. And yet, she hears that it requires a response, an RSVP, a "*Fiat mihi*" -- Let it be done unto me. The message of Mercy similarly requires a response from us. A year dedicated to Mercy brings our attention to bear not just upon its presence but upon our need to receive it, and to drink it more deeply still.

Fittingly, the Jubilee begins on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, a holy day of obligation anyway. Oh, but what a feast! We celebrate the unearned character of the grace of Mercy. He came (it is Advent, after all!) and was crucified for our sins while we were still

sinners. But for her, for his mother whom he loved not only from before His birth, but from before hers. For her, Mercy comes even at conception. When most of us inherit in our spiritual genes the sin of our first parents, the only original one, she inherits not the original blessedness of creation but the final blessedness of prevenient redemption. All of this for her sake, certainly, but for His and for ours so that she could mother Mercy into the dark world.

Why call a Jubilee? So that all might be attentive to Mercy and invite him personally to break bread with us and for us when He knocks. So, moreover, that we might become missionaries of Mercy, mothering and bringing to birth Mercy in the hearts of despair, suffering, and death. The Blessed Virgin brings not just a perfect child into the world, but living, active and personal Mercy. He remains, not just then and there, but here and now offering to us and through us the same gift.

Mary is model and mother. Mercy is received and given. Blow the trumpet in Zion and announce a year of favor from the Lord.