

quality that is badly needed in our country and our Church. In order to be teachable, one has to know how to listen ... not just with the ears, but with the heart and soul as well. It means more than just listening to and agreeing with those who voice what we may already be thinking and feeling. A good listener is one who is open to widening his/her horizon and seeing things from a different perspective. Yes, this can be challenging at times. One might have to change, and no one likes change.

Mary remained open to the ways of the Holy Spirit by allowing herself to be taught about the things that matter, of the things necessary, and of the things worth doing and worth keeping. She learned that God was truly faithful to the covenant, when after thousands of years of Jewish yearning, she was to be the instrument of the Messiah's coming. She learned from Simeon that a sword would pierce her heart. When she and Joseph found Jesus in the Temple, she realized that Jesus' first priority was to be in His Father's house. At the wedding in Cana, she learned not to push Jesus into something he wasn't ready to do. Later in life, she learned that Jesus' idea of family was much broader than just His little family.

Faithful ... Available ... Teachable. In your moments of reflection the next few days, look back over the past year and see where these qualities have come into play and brought about some good change in your lives. Maybe the change involved some struggle with some old challenges or some new ones. But I hope you can now see, or at least are beginning to see, the good fruit of that struggle. God has given us many blessings and many opportunities. I hope you can rejoice in the way God has given us friends and companions who sustain us on our journey, who help us to grow and change, who challenge us to be faithful people.

None of us knows what the immediate future holds. Realistically, some of us will not be here next year. All we know for sure is that our openness to God's help and grace - no matter how it enters our lives - will help us get where we need to be, and eventually arrive at our heavenly homeland.

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It All Takes Resolve

by Rev. Herb Yost, C.S.C.

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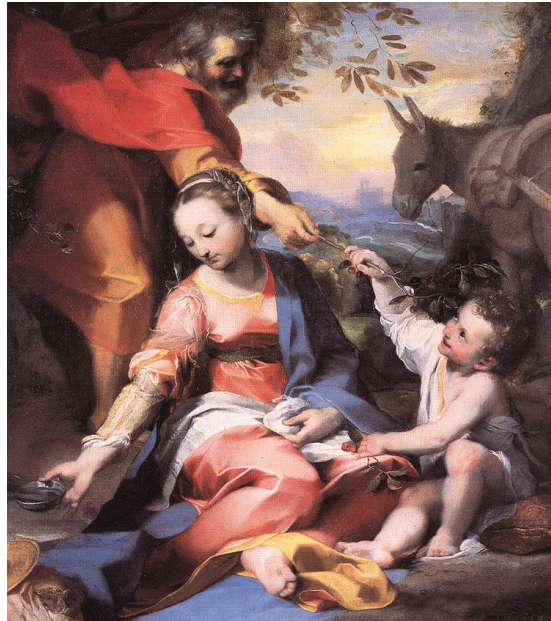
So, have you broken your New Year's resolution yet? My goal for 2016 is to accomplish the goals of 2015, which I should have done in 2014, because I promised to do them in 2013 and planned them in 2012. When I began the New Year in 2012, my prayer to the Lord was for two things: 1) to help me put together a fat bank account for a trip to visit the Yost/Hiemenz ancestral villages in Bavaria, Germany; and 2) a thin body. For some reason, God keeps mixing those up.

So, since that's the case, I decided this year to surrender to the inevitable and cooperate with the Lord. So my New Year's resolution is to be FAT!

I'm not talking here about putting on weight. By FAT I mean being Faithful, Available, and Teachable. Since her feast starts the New Year, who better than Mary to serve as a model?

Despite all difficulties and challenges, Mary remained FAITHFUL to her vocation as the Mother of God. She experienced some wonderful things during her pregnancy, as would any first time mother. No doubt there was happiness and excitement as Jesus moved from cradle to crawling to walking on His own. She and Joseph endured the Terrible Twos and the

Trying Threes. Most likely Mary did not expect the journey to Bethlehem in the last month of her pregnancy, nor did she expect to become a refugee, fleeing for safety to Egypt. She did not expect to be standing at the foot of the Cross, watching the execution of her Child.



The future was hidden from Mary when she said her "Yes" to Gabriel. Even though she knew her child was the Son of God, she had no idea what that meant. Even though at times Mary did not understand what Jesus was doing or why He was doing it, she still believed in her Son and in His mission. God did not have to ask Mary for her continued obedience;

God knew she was committed and the answer would always be "Yes."

So, too, can we be faithful to the Lord Jesus, through our prayer, our participation in the Eucharist, our fidelity to our calling and dignity as aging children of God. We will be loyal to our Lord and steadfast in our relationship with Jesus and His Father. Our faithfulness means trusting in God's way and God's Providence even though it doesn't make much sense to us in the present moment. It is a firm conviction in a loving Father whose love will never waver, no matter what we might think of ourselves because of our human sinfulness and failures.

Mary always made herself AVAILABLE. The great sign of that availability was consenting to be the Mother of Jesus. She made time each day for Joseph, and played with Jesus despite other, more pressing tasks at hand. She made herself available to God in times of prayer and reflection, and took time to ponder many things in her heart. I am certain that she was available for her neighbors in Nazareth. She was probably one of the organizers of the wedding at Cana, and stood ready to help and support the disciples as they wandered

through Judea and Galilee with Jesus.

So, too, can we make ourselves available for God by spending some time in prayer each day. We can be there for our spouses and children and other members of our family instead of holding fast to our own list of things that have to be done. We can help those who are in need, listen to those who need a listening ear, be a friend to those who are isolated from the community for any reason, and be a companion to those who feel like they are left to fend for themselves on their pilgrimage through life.

“ We can ... be a companion to those who feel like they are left to fend for themselves on their pilgrimage through life. ”

I also resolve to be TEACHABLE; in other words, to be humble enough to realize that I don't have all the answers. As you well know, this is a