

**Vigil of Mary, Mother of God**  
**December 31, 2018**  
**Homily for the Anglican Usage Mass**  
**of the**  
**St. Thomas More Catholic Parish**  
**celebrated at**  
**St. Joseph Catholic Church**  
**Scranton, PA**  
**Luke 2:16-21**

The propers of the Mass are those prayers that are prescribed for worship on any given day of the Church Year. These prescribed prayers, whose origin is hundreds if not over a thousand years ago, are found in the Missal, the large book on the altar that you see me pray from at every Mass. The prayers comprise a theme for each day, often taking their inspiration from Holy Scripture, incorporating within them the doctrines and traditions of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. The theme of today's propers is intercessory prayer, specifically the intercessions of our blessed Mother, St. Mary, the Mother of God, prayers which she offers on our behalf.

Intercessory prayer is easy enough for us to understand, as we undertake it every day, if we observe even the meanest devotions. On a daily basis we are asked by friends, relatives, loved ones, and even strangers to pray to the Lord for a certain object. We may be asked to pray for the healing of a sick person, for the repose of the souls of the deceased, that one be able to find a job, or that friends we know might be reconciled after an altercation. Whatever the case, we can all think of prayer requests we've heard or made within the past week, interceding, praying to God for another person's intention, asking that the Lord may bless and keep him, make His face to shine upon him, and be gracious to him as we heard in our Old Testament lesson.

Asking St. Mary to intercede on our behalf is a similar undertaking, but with the promise of increased benefits. We ask our blessed Mother to intercede for us, of course, because she is able to, one of the countless saints before the Throne of Grace who worship the Blessed Trinity. To ask the saints to pray for us is akin to asking our friends to pray for us. But the prayers of the saints are more efficacious because, having received the Beatific Vision, their wills are united fully to God's own will. And knowing God's will, while being a close associate with the Lord of Hosts, the saints know what to ask for and how to ask for it. The prayers of the saints are more efficacious than ours because they are closer to God.

With St. Mary is added an additional level of intimacy, because, as the title of today's feast makes clear, our Blessed Mother is the Mother of God. As the Mother of Jesus, who is the incarnate second Person of the Blessed Trinity, St. Mary is in actual fact the Mother of God. She enjoys a bond with her Divine Son that is closer than any of ours, as Jesus is of her own flesh and blood. Moreover, as is the case with all the saints, her relationship with Jesus is not clouded by sin. To appeal to St. Mary for her intercessory help is to ask the help of her who is closest to God.

We must not forget, however, that she is close to us, as well. In the Epistle we heard that we have received adoption as sons of God the Father, having been redeemed in the Blood of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son. Therefore, we are by adoption brothers of Jesus Christ, whose mother is Mary. We are, therefore, her sons and daughters by adoption, as well.

This point was reaffirmed when Our Lady of Guadalupe made herself known to the people of Mexico in 1531, an apparition to which I made reference on Christmas Eve. When she came to St. Juan Diego,

she told him, "I am your mother." Thus, the Mother of God is not some capricious witch who one day loves us and the next day demands our hearts be ripped from our chests. No, the Mother of God cares for us as a mother cares for her nursing infant, more solicitous for our welfare than even our own mothers have been. She loves us as she loved her Divine Son, so she will plead to God the Father for our good with the same intensity with which she prayed with Jesus as she stood at the foot of the Cross. The person closest to Jesus Christ is our mom. To ask for her help is to ask for the assistance of a woman who wants to see us in heaven with her forever. Even if that were not our biological mother's desire for us, it is the desire of our Blessed Mother, whose love is so linked to the love of God.

Therefore, to observe this Holy Day of Obligation every year is to begin the year the same way every year, asking the Mother of God to pray for us, that we might be more closely configured to the Son she bore.