

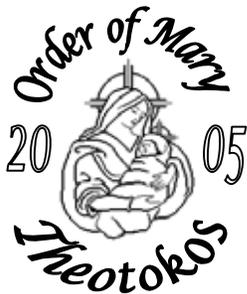
The Theotokan

January 1, 2007

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Order of Mary Theotokos

www.ecc-usa.org/OMT.html



**-Mark your Calendar-
Important dates to put
on your calendar:**

**Your Profession dates
because you need to
remember to request
First and Final
Profession documents
from the Abbot.**

2007 ECC+USA Synod.
Our 2007 ECC+USA Synod and Retreat was held at Mercy Retreat Center in St. Louis, Missouri. This is a beautiful and welcoming facility. All of our OMT Brothers and Sisters are invited to attend and if we have a large enough OMT attendance, we will have special OMT sessions in addition to ECC+USA session to which all clergy, religious, and laity are invited.

The dates for our 2007 Synod/Retreat are October 12-14, 2007. More info later.

From the Abbot

Dear Brothers and Sisters, OMT

As we welcome January and a new year, we should take a few minutes to reflect.

The name "January" comes from the Roman god Janus. Janus was the Roman god of gates and doors, beginnings and endings. He was represented with a double-faced head, each looking in opposite direction – to the past and to the future.

Today, as we begin this new year, is a good time for each of us to look back over the last year and examine our relationship with God and neighbor. Have I grown in faith, hope, and love? Have I taken the words of scripture beyond mere listening to real doing? Have I grown spiritually during 2006? And, to put some kind of measure on it, where would I rate myself in my love of God and love of neighbor during 2006 on a scale of 1 to 10?

The Gospel readings for the Feast of the Holy Family and for the Solemnity of Mary, the Theotokos, describe two events in the life the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph: the shepherds visiting the Holy Family at the manger in Bethlehem and, twelve years later, the separation of the Holy Family at the Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus was doing his *bar mitzvah* -- spiritually and legally becoming a man in his Jewish faith.

Both bible stories seem to support that Mary and probably Jesus came only gradually to a realization of the role they were called upon by God to play in God's plan for salvation. I think with our two thousand year old knowledge based on Sacred Scripture and Tradition, we sometimes feel that Mary and Jesus were just following a script – as in a pageant – and they knew all along the details of its meaning and outcome. It is in a sense logical that we would think that because the Gospel writers go to great lengths to present the events of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies – everything from the "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son and he shall be named Emmanuel" from the prophet Isaiah, to the suffering servant in the Book of Lamentations.

But these readings show both the words of the shepherds and the words of Jesus in the Temple as events that Mary took and "pondered in her heart" And, by the way, I think it is reasonable to assume that Mary at the foot of the cross of the crucified Christ on Good Friday, was still pondering in her heart the meaning of all the events of Christ's life and her motherhood.

These Gospel stories present Mary to us as a model of the new life in Christ that all of us wish for ourselves in the new year.

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From the Abbot, continued.

There are three wonderful characteristics of Mary in the narrative from Luke's Gospel that can guide us this year:

First, Mary's unquestioned faith in the plan of God for her. When the angel Gabriel came to Mary to tell her that she would be the mother of Jesus, she said, "how can this be, I have no relations with a man?" And the Angel said that the Most High shall overshadow you and as a proof of this Godly power, your very old relative, Elizabeth, who was called barren is now in her sixth month, "for nothing is impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." That was a tremendous life-altering act of faith in God. Mary gives us the example of unquestioned faith in the plan of God for us.

The **second** of Mary's guides for us is that she "treasured in her heart what she heard and saw and she pondered them." As she pondered, she surely grew in understanding of God and his plan. As she grew in understanding, surely her relationship with God became stronger and ever more motivational in her life.

I think each one of us will grow in the love of God and translate that love of God into action in our lives more during 2007 if we spend time pondering on our relationship with God. Remember, pondering takes time and quiet.

The **third** of Mary's guides tells us how to do that. First, we listen to God's word – perhaps no longer sent to us via angels as at the annunciation or at the manger – but through the Sacred Scriptures. We find God in the reading of His Sacred Word. Further, we can ponder the words and actions of people as Mary did in listening to the words about Jesus from the visiting shepherds; -- and the words from Jesus himself at the Temple. In both cases, it was other persons and just ordinary human situations that helped Mary come to a greater understanding of God's plan for her.

We, too, can and should do that through reading the Scriptures, saying our favorite prayers, meditating, putting the world events in a spiritual perspective, and particularly through sharing the Eucharistic meal of the Lord.

As we begin January 2007, like the Roman god, Janus, we look to the past and we look to the future. But, we do that in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. And we look to Mary as the prime example of how to grow in faith, hope, and love of Almighty God, through Jesus.

Have a wonderful new year in Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.

Bishop Carl

+Rev. Carl T. Swaringim, Abbot

The Order of Mary Theotokos
is a ministry of the
Ecumenical Catholic
Church+USA.
Professed membership is open
to all men and women of faith,
married or single,
regardless of their
denominational affiliation.

Mary, Queen of Peace,
pray for us.