

## Homily – Mary Mother of God

Jesus never promised us a life free of difficulty. Adversities and problems challenge us every day.

The peace that the world offers us is the peace which proceeds from consistently evading problems and refusing to face the trials that confront us.

The peace that Jesus gives us through the presence of the Holy Spirit is the peace that comes from conquering each problem. No experience of life should be able to do away with our peace of soul. We must never allow any danger or suffering to diminish it.

We cannot allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the adversities that come our way. We must consider the many blessings that God gives us. We should greet each day in a profound spirit of gratitude. We might make a list of all the wonderful things that are happening in our lives and give thanks to God.

By forming the habit of a thankful heart, we will be filled with that profound joy, that source of insurmountable strength allowing us to persevere in the face of difficulty.

When we learn how to complain less and always to look for the brighter side of things, then and only then shall we discover the unsuspected treasures of life. We all know that life is filled with many challenges and adversities. But, we also know that life is filled with many blessings as well. We need to place our focus on the positive side of life.

Many people prefer to complain about their problems. However, when we learn to focus on the positive side of life, we develop the capacity to become happy and enthusiastic. Then we seek to construct, generate, love, appreciate, encourage and grow when we confront the challenges of life.

It may seem that to live on the positive side of life is simplistic, immature, and even naive. Yet, when we focus on the many blessings of life and commit ourselves to overcoming the challenges and adversities of life, we will live with inexpressible peace and joy.

Mary, Mother of God, whose Feast we celebrate at the beginning of this New Year, knew what it was like to live a life full of difficulties. She was an unwed, pregnant young woman in a time when that posed many problems. Her husband died, leaving her without his support. She witnessed the crucifixion and death of her son. Yet no one can say Mary did not live at peace.

Christianity is not about living an unreal existence. The problems of life are real. Here is a story about a man who knew how to live with peace and joy throughout his life.

Jerry was the kind of guy we all love to hate. He was always in a good mood and always had something positive to say. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, "If I were any better, I would be twins!"

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Seeing this attitude really made one of Jerry's friends curious, so one day he asked Jerry, "I don't get it! You can't be a positive person all of the time. How do you do it?"

Jerry replied, "Each morning I wake up and say to myself, 'Jerry, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or you can choose to be in a bad mood.' I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it. Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life."

"Yeah, right, it's not that easy," the friend protested. "Yes, it is," Jerry said. "Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people will affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. The bottom line: It's your choice how you live life."

His friend reflected on what Jerry said. Soon thereafter, he left the restaurant industry to start his own business. Jerry and his friend lost touch, but Jerry's friend often thought about him when he made a choice about life instead of reacting to it.

Several years later, the friend heard that Jerry did something you are never supposed to do in a restaurant business: he left the back door open one morning and was held up at gunpoint by three armed robbers. While trying to open the safe, his hand, shaking from nervousness, slipped off the combination.

The robbers panicked and shot him. Luckily, Jerry was found quickly and rushed to the local trauma center. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Jerry was released from the hospital with fragments of the bullets still in his body.

Because of his travels, Jerry's friend was finally able to speak to him about six months after the accident. When he asked him how he was, Jerry replied, "If I were any better, I'd be twins. Wanna see my scars?" The friend declined to see his wounds, but did ask him what had gone through his mind as the robbery took place.

"The first thing that went through my mind was that I should have locked the back door," Jerry replied. "Then, as I lay on the floor, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live, or I could choose to die. I chose to live."

"Weren't you scared? Did you lose consciousness?" Jerry continued, "The paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the emergency room and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes, I read, 'He's a dead man.' "I knew I needed to take action."

"What did you do?" asked the friend.

"Well, there was a big, burly nurse shouting questions at me," said Jerry. "She asked if I was allergic to anything. 'Yes,' I replied. The doctors and nurses stopped working as

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they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled, 'Bullets!' Over their laughter, I told them. 'I am choosing to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead.'

Jerry lived thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. Jerry's friend learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully. Attitude, after all, is everything.