

## The Feast of the Mother of God

By Fr. Grey Ames

I was prepared to talk to you today about Bill and Melinda Gates, and the rock star Bono, and how Time Magazine had name them the Persons of the Year, a few years ago. Their work on world health issues and the world debt is inspiring. And the essay that explained why they were chosen was beautifully written. But yesterday, with the homily already in my head, I was reading the Times. An article explained where some of the money raised through charitable foundations goes. And it featured a single mom of three teenagers; who worked two jobs, was an athlete, had no health insurance, and then discovers she has cancer in three places. Amy Shultz has lost a lot, but not her spirit. So many have stepped forward to help her, and the article concludes with her words, *Just when you're at the end of your rope and you think there's no hope, something or someone shows up to change your mind and give you faith.* And I looked at the article, and I looked at the magazine; and without wanting to dishonor the amazing work of the Gates or Bono, I got that moment. For Amy Shultz, the someones who show up are the persons of the year.

**When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child.**

As you get older, the year goes by so quickly. It seems that more than a lifetime fills the days. For some of us, the past year was filled with milestones: a birth, a marriage, a degree earned. For some it was a time of challenge and testing: in our relationships, our employment, our health. And for many of us, it was a year when we sadly said goodbye to loved ones who died.

During our lifetime, we each have a moment, when we might be at the end of our rope; we struggle with hope. Maybe it is a personal crisis; maybe it is when we watch the news and see the struggles of the human family. And then, someone steps forward to change our mind, to restore our hope. We believe that Jesus is that someone who comes to us. His coming is not confined to a stable in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. He comes in every hour of every day of every month of every year, and he opens our eyes, even in the darkest hour, to see that we are not alone. But he also issues a great challenge: that in his name we become that someone who brings hope and faith to others.

What resolution are you making for the new year? Losing weight, exercising, reading more, eating right, cutting out the smoking, cleaning up your house? Good for you. We will check with you next year this time. But could this be the year when you become that someone, who makes the time, who clears the space, or musters up grace and courage to bring faith and hope to a person who needs it. On this day, could you resolve that you would embrace:

**PLAN** Throughout scripture, it is the same story. God chooses the ordinary to do the extraordinary. Mary, an ordinary young girl becomes the Mother of God. The poor despised shepherds become the first to announce the Good News. Jesus chooses ordinary men to be his disciples. Could this be the year that you stop explaining why you can't or giving the excuse that you don't know enough, are just ordinary you. Could this be the year you say, God has a plan for my life, and I am ready to be part of it.

**PRAYER** Moses went through a lot of adventures, and had to put up with some rather dismal people. And yet, he has this spirit of gratitude. He tells the people that as God has blessed them, they were called to be a blessing for one another. There are many prayers you hold in your heart today, and will hold in the days ahead. All of them are important. But could you resolve today to end every prayer by asking God, even in your times of trouble, to make you a blessing for others?

**PASSION** In her piece about the work of the Gates and Bono, Nancy Gibbs writes, *this is not about pity. It's more about passion ... the risk of pity is that it kills with kindness; the promise of passion is that it builds on the hope that the poor are fully capable of helping themselves if given the chance.* Jesus lived a life of passion, not of pity. Jesus didn't just speak a message of peace and love and forgiveness. He made peace, he lived love, he offered forgiveness. Could this be the year when we move from faith being about what I have to do, what I have time for, what-dare I say-I can get away with. Could it be the year that we become a little more passionate: I want the message of Jesus to be seen in the way I live my life. We might not become the person of the year; but we would become that someone, who for maybe just an hour, restores faith for a person who had begun to lose hope.

### READINGS OF THE WEEK

Numbers 6: 22:27

Galatians 4: 4-7

Luke 2: 16-21

January 1, 2012

## 母 親 —— 家 庭 愛 的 朝 陽

趙 中 興

有一個年輕的女郎因讀書成績欠佳，在一次考試之後自感成績很不理想，不願回家，以免受到父母們的斥責；又不願在學校內受到師長及同學的歧視，一時想不開，便憤然離家出走，跑到紙醉金迷的城市。由於學歷不高，沒有適當的專長，又不願以勞力安分地工作，經過職業媒介單位的介紹而進入聲色場所工作。在高漲的生活壓力之下，身不由己的漸漸沉淪在罪惡的漩渦裡而不能自拔，過著糜爛的歡場生活。幾年之後的一個深夜裡，當她從一個瘋狂的舞會中返回公寓時，忽然間寂寞感湧上心頭，她感到無比的空虛、煩悶、痛苦、失望、落寞，覺到生活實在沒有意義；她決定想以自殺了結自己的生命；當她將大把的安眠藥準備好，正要一口吞下的時候，忽然心中湧起了一個意念：無論如何在她離開這個毫無牽掛的塵世之前，總要回到家鄉看看，再重溫一下童年在家鄉的美夢，再看看愛她的媽媽一面，於是她雇了計程車，刻不容緩的連夜趕回家鄉去。

她回到家鄉，天還沒有亮，黑暗籠罩著大地，她遠遠地望到了家門，看到大門敞開，門燈亮著，她倏然一愣，驚悸地緩下了腳步，她正在門口發愣時，年邁的老媽媽從屋裡緩緩地走了出來，驚喜而顫抖的身體，哽咽地說：「孩。子。是。是。是你。回來了。了嗎？」少女再無法矜持，眼淚像是斷了線的串珠滴滴地滾落下來，疾步撲到媽媽的懷裡，激動地泣不成聲的說：「媽！是。我。我回。回。來。了！為甚。麼。家。裡。做。著門，我只。當家中。發生了。甚麼事。」老人家抱著女兒，淌著眼淚，向女兒訴說：「孩。孩子。從。你走後，我天天。盼著。你回來，大門。天。天天敞著。無論。白天。黑。黑夜。我都。等著。你回。回。來。等著你。回來。回來啊！」好一副感人心弦的母女重逢的溫馨畫面，任誰看了都會流出感傷的眼淚。

天主爲了照顧每一個孩子，因此創造了母親，母愛是人間愛中最真誠的，也是天主賞給人類最大的恩寵。捨己爲人的無私的付出，只有父母對待子女的愛中才能顯露無遺。

教宗若望保祿二世致每個家庭的書信中有這樣一段話說：「一旦子女誕生，父母說：「這是我們的兒子、我們的女兒」，他們也可像厄娃一樣說：「我賴上主獲得了一個人」（創四1）的確是一個新的人，在九個月的懷胎、期待之後，出現在父母、兄弟姐妹面前的。一個新生小孩一旦出世，就把自己給予父母，「他的存在是一種恩賜，是造物主給予受造物的主要恩賜」。父母及子女都應珍視這份恩賜才對。親愛的朋友們：我們無論是甚麼人，無論是做過甚麼事，無論流浪到甚麼地方，甚至無論沉淪了有多久，都會有一雙誠摯慈愛的手爲你（妳）伸張著，等待著你（妳）回來，等待著擁抱你（妳）。那就是母親的手，她永遠不會捨棄我們，因爲母親是家庭的朝陽，她會永遠照耀子女的心扉，等待著我們投奔到她們的懷抱裡，向她傾訴心曲。因之我們說：「時時思念母親的人是有福的；時時思念母親，又及時孝愛母親的人是更有福的。」

人間的母親不能陪我們一生，她會老、病、死、離去。天主特賜給我們一位天上的母親，那就是聖母瑪利亞。他較之我們生身的母親更時時刻刻殷切地愛著我們，助佑著我們，給我們援助。我們可曾向她祈求麼？當我們感到孤寂時，趕快跪到她跟前，向她訴求吧。「我的母皇，我的母親，我全屬於妳，我的所有一切都屬於妳。」你一定會得到你所期待的恩賜；因爲她是諸寵中保！全心依恃她吧！

摘自「小故事大道理」