

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God Cycle B January 1, 2012
Numbers 6:22-27 Galatians 4:4-7 Luke 2:16-21

I happen to know a number of parents who, for one reason or another, have adopted children. They've given children a loving home and a chance in life as a result of their choosing to adopt.

Adoption will take place as a result of a few different reasons; the inability or difficulty to physically having children, be it on the part of husband, wife, or both. Another reason being is to take real, concrete action toward the reality that some children born into our world are not wanted or desired at the time of their birth due to varying circumstances. Thus, once again adoptive parents will provide a loving and caring home that allows a child the opportunity to grow as Jesus himself grew; in wisdom and strength.

A third reason for adopting may be that we here in the United States understand quite well the countless and vast blessings we have received from God. Blessings we have certainly worked very hard for, such as the opportunity to receive a good education in schools from grade level through college. And we wish others from different nations and within our own nation, who may not have the same opportunities we have, to have access to such a possibility.

So adoption, in most cases, is sought after from a selfless, dedicated loving manner, for the best of reasons. Mothers and fathers who adopt and provide children a good home are living their Christian faith in a most solemn way.

As we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, which thankfully falls on a Sunday this year, this feast day invites us to focus on our own adoption. And how large is our family as a result of our adoption. As disciples through baptism, we have all been adopted into the family of God. A family that takes on the look of Mary, Joseph, and their child, Jesus. We have all been adopted into this family. And when we look at this family, who in their right mind or right heart would ever refuse such an adoption?

In today's 2nd reading, St. Paul writes to the Galatian community of believers that God sent his Son, born of a woman, so that we might receive adoption as sons and daughters of the Most High. That Jesus' birth, a birth of intervention, raises our status from being slaves to sin, to eating the bread of angels. From being slaves to our passions, to – like adopting parents – caring for the basic needs of the most vulnerable and those at a disadvantage.

This is no ordinary adoption Paul writes about. There's no red tape first of all. And secondly, it doesn't take months and years for the process to be completed.

The process of this adoption is already spelled out in the birth of our Savior. What this adoption does is to take the adoption of parents toward children and furthers such an adoption to the point of admittance into heaven, through the many gifts of the Spirit.

While parents provide for adopted children in this world, the adoption Paul addresses is our adoption by the Spirit on the grand scale of eternity. In other words, our adoption into the holy family has eternal results. We are disciples of this new born child who no longer have the need to cry out, "Where is my God?" Instead, through this adoption into faith and hope, we can now cry out "Abba, Father."

We have a God who has come to us. A God now with a face. A God who draws us into his life and says, "Welcome home." A God who allows us to participate in his

love as adopted sons and daughters. We rediscover our true home in this adoption.

Think about that; we all belong to the same family as a result of our adopted faith. How does such a truth cause us to view others?

As far as numbers go, there are many brothers and sisters thanks to Mary as Mother, Joseph as earthly father, and Jesus as Son of the Most High.

Looking over here at the crèche, we see more than three people there. We also see the shepherds.

When I was in the Holy Land this past year, as our bus drove from one site to another, we saw shepherds out in the fields keeping watch over their flocks outside the towns we visited. I couldn't help but think these are my brothers and sisters because it belongs to them – the shepherds - for all time that they were the first ones to return glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. They were the first adopted brothers and sisters. They went away from their adoptive parents Mary and Joseph, and away from the Son of the Most High, in such ways that what they had just witnessed caused them to spread the Good News that God has visited his people. The shepherds were the first ones to preach the Gospel. With voice and action.

It's good for us to be so intimately connected with such a simple group of brothers and sisters. With such a simple set of parents. With such a simple child. They are our adopted family. Their simplicity beckons our humility to always kick in.

Our adoption as Christ-followers challenges us to care for one another. In the model of Mary as Mother of God, as Joseph our earthly, spiritual father, and the shepherd's who embraced their own adoption as part of this family.

There are many reasons why God adopts us and makes us his own. The greatest, of course, being our welcome into an eternal home where many mansions have been readied for our presence as family.