

- In the comic strip "Blondie," Dagwood named his resolutions for the new year:
 - First, to sleep late;
 - second, if I'm late for work every day, tough;
 - third, log more hours than ever on the sofa;
 - fourth, double the time I take for hot baths; and
 - fifth, eat bigger late night snacks whenever I want.
 - Dagwood makes these resolutions, not because he is lazy or because he wants to eat more or avoid work but because, as he says, these are "five resolutions I know I can keep."
- Traditionally on New Year's Day, we make resolutions: a list of changes we'd like to make in our lives.
 - Often times we promise to focus more on the positive in everything, even when miniscule, and offer compliments rather than focus on the negative and tear someone down, even if we don't speak out loud the thoughts we are thinking
 - or perhaps it is to make adjustments to our time and calendar to spend more time with our families and in prayer than on the internet or at work.
 - Perhaps it is something ridiculously mundane that will move us in the right direction like exercising more and eating less.
 - If your anything like me, you make grandiose lists on whatever the new electronic gadget is that year and then by January 3 or 4th, you just delete them because, if you drop off this early in the year, you certainly don't want to be reminded come next December by seeing that same list.

- Number 1: Remember every day that God loves you.
 - Plant this point first and foremost in your mind and heart each day, every day. Make it the first thing as you open your eyes, even before you open your eyes.
 - And then pick some piece of furniture in your bedroom or close by, some piece of your morning routine, even a bathroom fixture and, every time you look at it in the morning, remember again that God loves you.
 - It's no simple catch phrase or mantra to help you focus. It's the very heart of our faith and the most important thing God wants you to know.
 - This is the point God has wanted to make with us, each of us, all of us for 3,000 years. That's why he talks to Moses and Aaron and asks them to share it with the people of Israel.
 - God tells Moses and Aaron that, when you want the best for someone, when you truly want to bless them say this:
 - The LORD bless you and keep you!
The LORD let his face shine upon you,
and be gracious to you!
The LORD look upon you kindly
and give you peace
 - In other words, remember that God is with you and wants what best for you.

- Again, these are not mere platitudes because they spoke much more importantly to the Israelites about who God was.
 - Remember, the Israelites were in the middle of the desert, pulled out of Egypt, marched through the Red Sea, hauled across the sand, with God creating food and water, leading by pillars of fire and clouds of smoke.
 - Now God says to bless someone remind them of what I can do, how I can help, if you just stop and listen, if you wait patiently for me to work.
- That's resolution Number 1.
- Resolution Number 2: Remember every day that God loves.
 - Remember this as you begin to make your way through your day, as you plan out and start your activities and make your to-do list.
 - Then remember that God loves you even more as you venture forth in the great unknown of each new day and start to conquer that to-do list item by item
 - And because God loves you, he is going to help you get through that list. He wants to be part of each and every thing on that list.
 - This is the point Saint Paul is trying to make in our second reading: God sent his son as one like us, born of a woman and subject to the law.

- Jesus was truly human, taking on our humanity as we experience it every day:
 - the need to get up and eat breakfast and be in only one place at once.
 - To want to do one thing but be pulled in another direction by someone else like the widow who lost her son, or the woman who touched his cloak or Peter whose mother in law needed healing or Martha who wanted him to raise Lazarus, or even his own mother who wanted to spare that nice young couple from Cana; then there we those people like sheep without a shepherd who needed to be fed spiritually when he was so darn tired.
 - God did not forces himself into the world, and, with a snap of his fingers make everything better. Instead God inserted Himself, as one like us to bring us that love, one to another.
 - So, if we remember that God's love comes most profoundly in Jesus and remember that Jesus took on our human form that we might know God's love in every item on our to-do list, in every moment of the day, in every action we perform, in every thought we think, in every word we speak, then each of these becomes an opportunity to allow God to work within and through us.

- The tough part is remembering and that brings us to the third and final resolution for 2017:
 - Remember every day that God loves you. It will be difficult some days and in some situations but God loves us and wants to draw us closer to him. Like all love, it demands time.
 - This is what prayer is all about: getting to know God and allowing God to get to know us better. How can we call on a God we do not know? How can we claim to be a friend of Jesus when we refuse to spend time with him?
 - This is what God was trying to convey to Mary in our Gospel reading and scripture makes it clear that Mary had to remember this as well.
 - *Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.*
 - With the 20/20 hindsight of 2,000 years of Tradition and Church teaching, we forget that Mary was a poor girl from the back water town of Nazareth.
 - What did she know of angels and miraculous conceptions and perpetual virginity?
 - Any young mother struggles with the birth of her first child let alone when you throw in giving birth far from home because the emperor wanted everybody counted or the exile imposed because they feared for the child's life.
 - And certainly let alone shepherds showing up that the door of the stable telling story of angels choirs and heavenly hosts or the wise men coming from afar bringing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

- But Mary knew that God loved her and no matter how difficult or complicated or confusing or challenging or ridiculous anything seemed, if God loved her then God would take care of it. She simply held these things in her heart, reflected on them and turned them over to God and she kept on doing that right up to and beyond the foot of the cross.

- This is why we close out our celebration of the octave of Christmas with this day dedicated to Mary our Mother.
 - In her very person, let alone her maternity and her discipleship, Mary reminds us how much God loves us.
 - Through Mary, God enters the world in a most excellent way.

 - Through Mary God becomes human because he loves us and wants to bless us even more than he did with the Israelites.
 - He only led them through the desert.
 - In Jesus, God wants to lead us from death to life, from sinfulness to eternity, from humanity.
 - God wants to give us not only His Peace but His presence.

 - Through Mary God becomes human, born from her, born under the law, because he loves us and wants us to know that love even as we live out the laws of our own daily lives.

- Through Mary God becomes human and draws us closer to Himself that, by reflecting on all these things and holding them in our hearts, we might know and trust in God who may ask of us something that seems difficult or complicated or confusing or challenging or even ridiculous.

- In Mary, we have a model disciple and exemplar of the Church who shows us how to say YES to god. In Mary we have a friend and intercessor who never hesitates to fight for us. And in Mary we have a gentle mother who gathers us in her arms and beneath her cloak, all to remind us how much God loves us.

- So those are you New Year's resolutions for this year:
 - Number 1: Remember every day that God loves you.
 - Number 2: Remember every day that God loves you.
 - Number 3: Remember every day that God loves you.

- Like Dagwood, I hope you can keep at least one of those.