

Mary the Mother of God

By the time my mother died last summer, her health care had used up the money that my father had left her. That was fine with us kids. We knew that's what Dad would have wanted. I know people who inherited quite a bit of money from their parents, but my siblings and I all inherited things that money cannot buy: faith, family, love, education, and the desire to serve others.

All of us Christians have inherited something better than money. We are all children of God. Paul makes this point in his letter to the Galatians. He says that Christ was born like one of us so that we might receive adoption as daughters and sons of God. Through the Spirit of God we call out, "Abba, Father!" We are not slaves but children, and because we are children, we are heirs of God's own life.

We hear this passage today because we are celebrating Mary the Mother of God, and this is the only place in all of St. Paul's letters where he talks about Jesus' mother. Paul wrote the Letter to the Galatians before the gospels were written, but he had probably heard about Jesus' mother. Still, the only reference to her in all his letters is this phrase about Jesus: he was "born of a woman." That woman, we know, was Mary.

God chose an unwed virgin to be the mother of his only Son. He chose a woman whose fiancé wanted to get out of the relationship, a woman who was probably the subject of much gossip. But through this woman, God became like us, and now through her Son, we can become more like God. Because of Mary's yes, we have become children of God, and we have inherited something better than money, eternal life.

Not everyone gets along with their parents. Not everyone even knows their parents. But our parents have given us more than we may realize. Perhaps as we start this new year, we can think about the hopes and dreams of our parents, their values and worries. Somehow through them we have become the people we are. We are open to the greatest inheritance of all, life in Jesus Christ.