

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God – January 1, 2019 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.
Cathedral of St. Paul, Birmingham, Ala. – 5:30pm Vigil, 8:30 & 11am Day Masses – 500 words

Back in 1978, Citibank debuted its popular slogan, “The Citi Never Sleeps”. But for those who were around back then, think back to that time: there were neither home computers nor internet constantly streaming information into our lives; there was no 24-hour news cycle; we didn’t have the entire world at our fingertips on a rather addictive device in our pockets; indeed, perhaps we bought the annual “yearbook” for our encyclopedia set, to help us stay up-to-date. Life moved a lot slower, and in so many ways was far simpler.

Fast-forward to today, some 40 years later, and where are we at? Well, the proverbial city really never does sleep; I daresay we are more stressed-out than ever. But amidst constant busyness and activity, the Church still calls us to be here on certain days – whether Sundays or Holy Days – and contemplate, and rest. For “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever”.¹ The world changes and re-changes, but he does not. He calls us to periods of rest in this life, in preparation for the never-ending Sabbath rest of heaven. Thank you all for coming today!

So we seek to end one year and begin another under this divinely-ordained rest. Like the shepherds, who made haste to see Christ, we rush in from our hectic lives and are invited to ponder the things of God, like our Blessed Mother did. Today we celebrate her divine maternity: she really is the Mother of God. But being Mother of God did not require her to be God; she remained a mere human being, and so still had to learn and go deeper. Thus, she pondered. God is born in us also through the sacramental life – we, for our part, must contemplate also.

As we pray today, we also seek God’s blessing on the prior year, which is now consigned to history and cannot be changed. He was there the whole time: whatever happened was seen by him and was woven into the fabric of his Divine providence. He can write straight with whatever crooked lines there were; and, of course, we thank him for the many things that did go well, that do not need to be straightened out. Only God knows what 2019 will bring; we do well by visiting our Blessed Mother and her Son and asking for her prayer and his blessing!

While I have little doubt about where our society is headed in terms of getting more complex and busier, I hope we will resolve and fight to have the contemplation and rest that are needed for us to stay rooted in the peace of God during this new year. By now, the city indeed never sleeps – but let us never forget that we are called to be in the world and not of it.² Blessed Mother, dear Jesus: help us to know how to pray better, how to love God and neighbor better; how to find rest and peace with you throughout the coming year!

¹ Hebrews 13:8.

² Cf. John 17:15-16.