Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God: 1/1/23—5:00 PM, 7:30 and 11:30 AM

 My homily for today is based on my Christmas homily, and, for today’s homily to make sense, I have to give you a summary of my Christmas homily. So if you heard it and liked that homily, my doing so will give you the opportunity to enjoy it once again, but, if you heard it and didn’t like that homily, I’m giving you an opportunity to do some pre-Lenten penance.

 Central to my Christmas homily were these works written by St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (1:7) where he describes God’s favor and love for us as being **“Immeasurably generous.**” I said that God’s immeasurably generous favor and love were manifested in his Son’s birth among and even more so his Son’s dying for us. But I also stated that, if we only focus on Jesus’ birth, death, and Resurrection as the only manifestations of God’s immeasurably generous love and favor for us, we are handicapping ourselves from truly appreciating how immeasurably generous are God’s favor and love are for us.

 I then listed three additional factors which we need to see as also being manifestations of that immeasurably generous love and favor. The first would be the laws of nature which, as Albert Einstein said, had to be present before there was any physical creation otherwise there would have been no physical creation. The second of the three would be looking at our own family histories, the generations upon generations of believers who not only celebrated God’s immeasurably generous love and favor through all of the Baptisms, Masses, Communions, prayers, plus the witness of their faith which shaped them over the centuries but also influenced us and shaped our faith years later. The third of the three factors would be the coincidences we experience every day. In that homily, I shared my favorite definition of “coincidence” as being a “small miracle in which God chooses to remain anonymous” and shared one such “small miracle” which happened to me recently.

 I then described how God’s immeasurably generous love and favor are like the sound the blood flowing past our ear drums, that hissing sound that is always present but which often gets drowned out but is always there. I concluded that homily with these words, ***Often we let God’s love for us to be ‘drowned out’ by other concerns and priorities, but, without God’s love, those other concerns and priorities have no meaning. Please remember that our awareness of God’s immeasurably generous love and favor is as essential to us spiritually as the blood flowing through our bodies is essential to us physically.***

 Here ends the summary of my Christmas homily which you can find in its complete version on our parish’s website. What I’d like to add to it is that God’s immeasurably generous love and favor are not only manifested in the person of Jesus, not only manifested in Creation, not only manifested in our own family histories, not only manifested in the small miracles we experience in life, but God’s immeasurably generous love and favor are manifested to the world by the way we live our lives, and that’s where Mary whom we celebrate today comes in because she is our model of how to be manifestations of God’s love and favor.

 In one of his sermons, St. Augustine has this to say about the Blessed Virgin Mary,  ***Indeed the blessed Mary certainly did the Father’s will, and so it was for her a greater thing to have been Christ’s disciple than to have been his mother, and she was more blessed in her discipleship than in her motherhood***.

Again ***she was more blessed in her discipleship than in her motherhood.*** And what is God’s will for us? St. Paul puts it well in these words in his letter to the Colossians (3:12-15): ***Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,*** ***bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do.*** ***And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection.*** ***And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful.***

 I remember as a kid being fascinated by magnets, how they could invisibly draw pieces of iron, but, if you turned that magnet around it would repel, those pieces of iron. By the way we live our faith, we can be magnets which attract people to Jesus, but, on the other hand, by the way we live our faith, we can also repel people from Jesus. Following Mary’s model of discipleship, may we be powerful magnets always drawing people to Jesus by being manifestations of God’s immeasurably generous love and favor.