

Happy New Year! Happy Feast of Mary Mother of God!

There is a story about making New Year resolutions. A young man studying far from home, called his parents to wish them a happy New Year and when his dad answered the phone, he asked his dad, “Well Dad, what’s your New Year resolution?” His dad replied, “To make your mother as happy as I can all year.” When his mom got on the phone, he asked her the same question and she replied, “*To see that your dad keeps his New Year resolution.*”

Well, we too often make resolutions when the New Year comes. Sometimes we are able to keep them, other times we don’t follow it up. But that should never discourage us. We all must have “a new beginning for a new year.” Here we are in the month of January, named after the Roman god *Janus*, an appropriate symbol for the start of the New Year. The god Janus is two-faced, one looking to the past and another looking to the future at the same time. That is why the god Janus became the symbol of New Year to give thanks for the past and gather our hopes for the future.

Today, Church celebrates solemnity of “Mary the Mother of God”. **The** life of Jesus on earth begins with Mary. Therefore, it is appropriate that we begin the New Year with a Feast of Mary, the Mother of God. This celebration reminds us that the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God, is also our heavenly mother, and we are called to pray that God may bless each and every family here in this New Year with His peace and joy, and we in turn share his peace and joy with one another. The Scripture gives us ample evidence that Mary is the mother of God bcs God chose her to be the mother of Jesus, who is God & man.

1. Lk: “Behold, you shall conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall name him Jesus and he will be called the *Son of the Most High*” (Lk 1:31-32).
2. Elizabeth: “Why this great thing should happen to me that *my Lord’s mother* comes to visit me?” (Lk 1:43).
3. Jesus was fully God and fully man, St. John’s gospel says: “The Word became flesh and lived among us” (Jn 1:14).

Today's readings provide us with *showers of special blessings of the Lord for a successful New Year*. Bk. Of Numbers: on the formula of the divine blessing of the Israelites through Moses, gives us three special blessings on this New Year's Day.

1. The Lord will bless you and keep you safe!
2. The Lord will let his face shine upon you and be gracious to you!
3. The Lord will look upon you kindly and give you peace! Res. Psalm gives us a special blessing that, "God will bless you in his mercy."

Therefore, as today's first reading assures us of God's special blessings, let us pray that the Lord may let his face shine upon us, look kindly upon us, bless all our families, and fill our hearts with his peace and joy today and throughout this New Year 2023. As we celebrate the solemnity of Mary Mother of God, our blessed mother may guide every one of us as our loving mother during this New Year.

The Gospel tells us that the shepherds "found Mary and Joseph and the child". The shepherds were constantly on the lookout, constantly on the move; they were active and vigilant. "They went with haste, they found, they made known, they returned, glorifying and praising God". To receive grace, we have to be active, attentive and vigilant.

What about ourselves? What are we called to find at the beginning of this New Year? It would be good to *find time for someone*. Time is a treasure that all of us possess, and we want to use it only for ourselves. Let us ask for the grace to find time for God and for our neighbor – for those who are alone or suffering, for those who need someone to listen and show concern for them. If we can find time to give, we will be amazed and filled with joy, like the shepherds. May Our Lady, who brought God into the world of time, help us to be generous with our time.

So, we should pray: *'Holy Mother of God, to you we consecrate this New Year. You, who know how to cherish things in your heart, care for us, bless our time, and teach us to find time for God and for others. With joy and confidence, we entreat you: Holy Mother of God! Amen.'*

Have a Happy and Blessed New Year! (Fr. James CFIC)