

## With Mary, Mother of God, a Blessed Happy New Year

It is appropriate that we begin the New Year with a Feast of Mary, the Mother of God, because the life of Jesus on earth begins with Mary. If Jesus is Joy to the world, Mary can be called “mother of Joy”, and our greeting in the new year makes sense: Happy New year.

How can we find happiness in this new year to be a year of joy and peace?

1<sup>st</sup> Reading invites us, how to begin the day and the year with a wish of blessing.

“*the Lord bless you and keep you! -the Lord let his face shine upon you! - the Lord be gracious to you! – the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!*” (a perfect wish to start the year) Receiving the blessing from the Lord and offering it to others.

Gospel is telling us that we have the right answer as we meditate the events in Bethlehem. Let us go to Bethlehem to see what it is. Look into the cave. There is none of those things in which usually we seek happiness. *There are no riches, no power, no comfort or conveniences*, nothing but an almost empty cave on the outskirts of town. The only presence is a couple of animals, who warm up Jesus.

Now look at Mary and Joseph kneeling before the manger. They must be tired. They have traveled 100 miles or so from Nazareth to Bethlehem on foot/or on the jolting back of a donkey. They must be very hungry. They haven’t had a real

meal since they left Nazareth some 5-7 days ago. They must be cold in the midst of winter. It must have been very humiliating for them to discover no room among their relatives in their ancestral home or at the village Inn.

Yet in the midst of all of this, Mary and Joseph are the happiest people to walk the face of this earth. (Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart!) Yes, reflecting attentively on the mystery of incarnation will illuminate our heart, faith seeking understanding. Here in Bethlehem, they are teaching us the amazing paradox that it is *only when we lose ourselves in love* and service of Jesus, we do find happiness. Happiness that this world can never give us, and no one can take away from us. But how can we lose ourselves in the love and service of Jesus? Jesus has made it very simple, "Whatever you do for one of these least brethren you do for me."

So on this very first day of the New Year, let us ask for the grace to know Jesus more intimately, love him more ardently and follow him more closely and joyfully serve him in our brothers and sisters so that this New Year may be a year of blessing, true happiness for us!