

New Year's Eve Homily 2018

Tonight we stand on the threshold of a “New Year” and a “New Beginning.” In a few hours we will begin a month named after the Roman god Janus. It is an appropriate personification of the start of the New Year. The one special thing about the god Janus is he is two-faced. He has a face looking to the past and a face looking to the future at the same time. That is why the god Janus became the symbol of New Year's where we look at the past and give thanks for that.

We look to the future and gather our hopes for that. So, tonight as we get rid of an old year and look forward to a new one, we all try to be a little like Janus.

This is indeed a time to reflect and think about what the past year has brought and what the new year could bring. The beginning of a new year provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the special gift of time.

We recall the events of the previous year and express our gratitude to God for all the good things that have happened, all the while being aware that there have also been sad and painful experiences and perhaps sinful realities for which we feel sorry, and also the missed opportunities for which we regret.

It is a time to reflect, to stop and analyze, to take stock of our priorities, values, pursuits, and goals. Through soul searching questions we find that a review of the past year naturally leads to setting goals and resolutions for the new year. But most of all we joyfully celebrate the promise of a new set of months with new opportunities and happiness, and we try to be hopeful in spite of uncertainties and unknown threats lying ahead.

Tonight therefore, is a time to pray for God's blessings upon each one of us as we proceed in the new year. What a beautiful thing it is to have God's blessing to go forward with a new beginning for a new year!

As children of one Father, all human beings are linked to one another in fraternity, and only efforts that are born from a sense of fraternity can overcome the poverty, conflict, inequality, crime, fundamentalism and other ills facing the world today.

Moreover, the culture of personal well-being leads to a loss of the sense of responsibility and fraternal relationship. The poor and the needy are regarded as a **burden**, a hindrance to development. At most, they are considered as recipients of aid or compassionate assistance.

Everyone needs to be seen as a brother or sister, who is called to share the gifts of creation, the goods of progress and culture. Fraternity is both a gift and a responsibility each human being receives from God the Father, who calls people to fight against inequality and poverty that undermine the social fabric, to take care of every person, especially the weakest and most defenseless, to love him or her as oneself with the very heart of Jesus Christ.

Tomorrow is also the culmination of the octave of Christmas when we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. Exactly a week back we celebrated with great joy the feast of Christmas, commemorating the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary and reflected upon the mystery of the Incarnation, that is God taking the form of a human being in the person of Jesus Christ.

The life of Jesus begins with Mary. Therefore, it is appropriate that we begin the New Year with a Feast of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. Since Mary is the Mother of God she is the mother of joy, joy to the world. So the traditional greeting on this first day of the New Year is one of joy: "Happy New Year!"

Tomorrow's special feast affirms that the Blessed Virgin Mary is truly the Mother of God and shows the importance of her role in the mystery of our salvation. Through Mary we have become God's adopted daughters and sons. Through Jesus' Spirit, we are made God's own children and heirs of all that God has promised.

God is "Abba," like a wonderful parent who is absolutely crazy about us.

In a special way, Jesus has given us Mary to be our mother, too. Mary is our mother too and she cares for us and for all of God's family with the same love she had for Jesus. So, on New Year Day, we turn to Mary, our mother, with all our needs and hopes, confident that she will never fail us and give a new beginning for a new year.

The fresh New Year is in some way like the infant Jesus "wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." Both the new year and the new child seem so vulnerable but the almighty power of God is hidden in the New Year, just as it is in the tiny infant. God is fully prepared to wrap our fragile lives and hopes in the warm blanket of his ever present and constant love. With such assurance, we can face the future with generous hope and with light hearts.

For we too need to realize that the angels who spoke to the shepherds are speaking to us also when they say, "This will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

Let us then glorify and praise God, as the shepherds did, for his gift of the New Year and enter into it with our new resolutions giving a new beginning for a new year.

I wish you all a very Happy New Year!