

## MARY MOTHER OF GOD – January 1, 2018

One week ago we celebrated the Solemnity of Christmas – the birth of our Saviour Jesus. Today on this first day of the New Year, our first reading tells us, The LORD bless you and keep you! The LORD let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The LORD look upon you kindly and give you peace.

On this the first day of the New Year, many of us also begin a new path in life with hope and confidence. Often many of us make New Year's resolutions in the hope of starting over. With the onset of a new year we see an opportunity to begin again with courage, enthusiasm and hope to live up to the resolutions we make.

The start of a new year reminds us that no matter what our mistakes or sins have been in the past, we can always begin anew. The opportunity to make a new start is one of God's greatest gifts. How blessed we are as we gather this day to celebrate our first Mass of 2018! We are here to begin again; to look toward the future with hope, confidence and joy. We gather to pray to Jesus who saves us, to listen to the words of eternal life, and to become one with our loving God.

Today the Church invites us to honor the Mother of God, who is also our mother and to accept God's blessing on our life's journey. The words of the response to the psalm, "May God bless us in his mercy," are the summary of today's Scripture. In the first reading, the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron and his sons, "the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you." This is called the Covenant of Sinai. What a wonderful reminder that God came to bless us and keep us in his love rather than to condemn us for our lack of faith.

In the second reading, St Paul speaks about our baptismal adoption by God. We are children of God and heirs of heaven. It is so good to renew our baptismal promises at the beginning of the New Year.

We feel like children again, living and walking with their father who is always ready to teach them, lead them, are for them and forgive them, when forgiveness is needed. This is our baptismal covenant.

St Luke speaks to us about Jesus, Mary and Jesus in the third reading. In this Gospel passage the Church gives us an example that we may follow in the coming year.

Like parents, relatives, teachers and friends who are living examples for us to follow, the Church gives extraordinary examples to follow in Mary, Joseph and Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the Light, the Life and the Way." Of Mary we hear, "But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart." A life of prayer and contemplation of God is recommended to us.

It is said of Joseph, "He was a virtuous man." He was a man of faith, obedience and action. That is what is needed in today's world – people of faith in God and each other.

It is a new year! What will it bring? We cannot know. But our Scriptures today provides us a wonderful way to approach a new beginning. Mary, a brand new mother, was asked by God to venture into an unknown future, filled with joy and suffering as all of life is. Mary heard the message offered by the shepherds, and St Luke tells us she kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. May God bless you at the beginning of this New Year.