



Faith for Many Blessings

On the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God

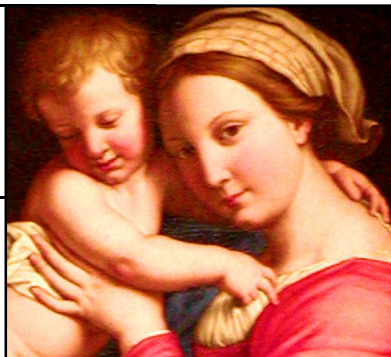
Read

Num 6:22-27

Ps 67:2-3,5-6,8

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:16-21



HAPPY NEW YEAR! On this holy day, which includes an ob-

ligation to celebrate Mass because it's as important as Sunday, I pray that you will have a very Jesus-centered year in which your faith increases your joy as you receive his healing love and the gift of his emboldening strength to enable you to succeed in every difficulty.

Use the prayers in Mass to consecrate your new year to the protection and help of Christ's mother Mary and to make this a year of many blessings.

In today's first reading, God teaches Moses how to pass blessings onto others. Today's responsorial Psalm includes a request for God to bless us. The second reading describes the greatest blessing we've received: our adoption by God the Father. As his children, we inherit all that belongs to him. He has made available to us eternal life and every blessing under the heavens and in heaven.

Blessings come to us all the time. Every breath and each heartbeat is a blessing of life. But would you like to be amazed by your blessings, like the people in today's Gospel reading who heard the testimony of the shepherds?

Such amazement is the awe we feel when we recognize the presence of Jesus and are truly conscious of what's happening. We are

blessed whenever we see, do, hear, or feel something that is Jesus or comes from Jesus or reveals him to us. Thus, we're even blessed in situations that feel like curses, because he is there, guiding us through it!

To grow stronger in faith, we need to become more aware of our blessings. This requires keeping our eyes on Jesus. Admittedly, this is hard to do, but it's possible with decisive effort and the help of the Holy Spirit. Look past the problems: There is the victorious Jesus! Look past your emotional reactions to hardships: There is the peace of Christ! Look past the person who is sinning against you: There is Jesus comforting you!

Be awed by the fact that Jesus is always there and that everything good you do is a blessing from Jesus and also to Jesus. In hardships, we overcome evil by doing good to others with Jesus, which is also then a blessing to Jesus. In this, we become aware of the blessings of God's love, sympathy, and victory. And we'll find other blessings, too.

The next time someone fails to be good to you, stop expecting it from them and look for Jesus himself to give you what you need. As you improve at recognizing him, you'll become aware of his blessings even during the heat of the trial, and your faith will grow stronger.

In every situation, keep your eyes on Jesus to see his hand reaching toward you, blessing you.

Let us learn from Mary. She observed everything that happened and reflected on it to see what God would do. When Mary looked at the shepherds, did she see scruffy, stinky, unkempt strangers barging in? Of course not. Look at the scruffy people in your own life. How many blessings do you see?

May your New Year be filled with fully realized blessings!