

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we embark upon a new year, we are thankful for the many gifts that God has given us and his message of faith, namely, that God loves us so much that he sent his only Son to redeem us and to show us the way to the Father in heaven.

My hope for us is that we share our faith with loved ones and strangers alike, proclaiming the joyous tidings, “EMMANUEL”, which means 'God is with us.' And we should not just share our faith but we should reach out to one another with all the blessings God has given us, especially the gift of peace, and may the peace of God illumine your heart and lead you to the heart of God.

Fr. Donatus and the Parish Council wishes peace and good will to our parish community, assuring you of our prayers and best wishes always.



BEWARE * BEWARE *

Please be aware of this **HOLIDAY SCAM** these scams are on the rise. Father Donatus has been informed that someone is using his name to receive money from unsuspecting parishioners. Below is what is being sent. Please pass it on. Thanks and God bless

Hi, How are you? I need a favor from you, please text me back as soon as you get this message. Blessings, Pastor. Donatus Chris Mgbeajou,

And it goes on to ask for iTunes gift cards in the amount of \$500, in \$100 denominations.

PLEASE IGNORE

St. Therese Catholic Church

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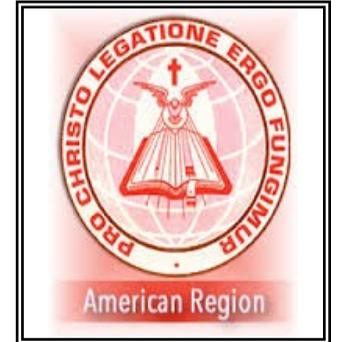
Email: sttherese1350@yahoo.com Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400



THE SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

NEW YEAR'S DAY
January 01, 2021

“He was named Jesus”



THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, THE MOTHER OF GOD

Blessing

The new year begins with a blessing. For us, blessing speaks of a consecration or setting aside of a thing or space or person, but the biblical use of blessing goes deeper than that. A blessing is an action of God that leads to happiness and fulfillment. So we begin the new year with a blessing that's bigger than all time.

FIRST READING: Numbers 6:22–27 RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 67:2–3, 5, 6, 8
SECOND READING: Galatians 4:4–7 GOSPEL: Luke 2:16–21

Comment

God's blessing is given to Mary, and through her to all of us. For centuries, since 431 A.D., we have identified Mary as the God-bearer, the Mother of God. When the Council of Ephesus in that year declared Mary as the Mother of God, they were also saying that Jesus is God as well as human. This huge claim, of course, is nothing less than the impenetrable mystery of the Incarnation, which we celebrated only a week ago on December 25.

We revisit the Incarnation today on this first day of the new year. We are greeted with the kindly, peaceful blessing of God. This blessing is fulfilled in the Incarnation. The Gospel for this Mass today is the same as that of the Mass at Dawn on Christmas Day, with the addition of the Jewish rite of circumcision. We move quickly from the scene at Bethlehem to the brief statement about fulfilling the law of Moses, a reminder that this small family is firmly grounded in the tradition and faith of Israel. The name Jesus, proclaimed by the angel Gabriel, is given to this child. It means "the Lord saves." We need to be reminded that for the people of Israel, names are not chosen for superficial reasons. They are not trendy or cute. Names carry great meaning; they identify one's mission in life. Often enough we have read of name changes that describe mission. Abram became Abraham, the father of great nations. Sarai became Sarah. And, in the Christian Scriptures, Jesus gave Simon the new name Peter, which defined his mission. Today we recall that Jesus is the Lord's salvation. God's active blessing recorded in the book of Numbers is realized in Jesus. God's action is to become one with us, to bring happiness and fulfillment.

It is through Mary that this happens. As Paul reminds us, this Son who is God's active salvation has come to us through a woman who was born under the law. Through this daughter of Israel the law is fulfilled. In this time, we are welcomed in. We are adopted children. God's salvation is ours, too. We are blessed ones. We can call the Lord by a new familiar name—Abba. This, says Paul, is God's design.

Reflection

And what a design! On this oldest of Marian feasts, we see the whole picture. We are among the blessed. Again, not because we are worthy or deserving or clever or rich. We are blessed because God is generous and wills our salvation.

We are at the far end of a long history that began when God brought light and life from chaos at the beginning of time. We are the youngest inheritors of God's blessing, a blessing beautifully enunciated by Moses' brother Aaron. We are the newest Christians in a long train of Christians. We share in the blessing given so explicitly to Mary and reiterated by Elizabeth, "Blessed are you among women." Elizabeth gave us the words that reflected her understanding of blessedness—the Jewish understanding. God's blessing is God's action that brings happiness and fullness of life.

We confess the faith proclaimed at Ephesus that calls Mary the Mother of God, which identifies Jesus as God. Mary retains a privileged place in the Church's life and prayer. She, who is Mother of God, is also Mother of the Church.

Blessings given must be received, otherwise they are like unopened gifts. As Mary received God's blessing, so must we. She lived as a woman blessed by God; so must we. This blessing is a responsibility as well as a privilege. It asks of us an obedience—literally a deep listening—to the blessing of God among us today. The overflow of exuberant blessings and songs and canticles scattered throughout the gathering prayers and the responsorial psalms is the Church's means of celebration today. We, in turn, must allow them to lead us to the gratitude that finds expression in a life that, like Mary's, is a living witness to God's blessings.

Praying for the Family

Father, we pray for the family and circle of friends who are grieving the loss of **Deacon Julian Richard**, who passed away Wednesday, December 23, 2020. He served as Deacon at St. Therese for over 25 years.

There has been no arrangements made as of yet for Deacon Richard, but we will continue to keep their family in our thoughts and prayers. In this season of uncertainty we pray for all of our families, near and far, we ask the Lord to fill our hearts with hope as we wait on You to move in our lives and flow out from our hearts. In Jesus' Name, Amen.