

Homily for New Year Day (Mary, Mother of God), 01-01-2022 by Fr. Lubem Robert Waya, osj.

First Reading: Numbers 6:22-27

Psalm: Psalm 67

Second Reading: Galatians 4:4-7

Gospel: Luke 2:16-21

WHAT IS NEW?

Today is a tripartite celebration: the solemnity of Mary, mother of God, World Day of Peace, and this day also is the first day of the New Year 2022. Hence, it is a thing of joy for us all to see this day. But as we are in a New Year let us ask ourselves, what is new? Can we say with the new year we have become new people? Has time changed? Is there now peace in the world? Are we no longer living the same lives in the same world anymore? Are we no longer doing same things we have always done in the past years? So, what then is new this time? We may consider this moment as the best opportunity to make our new year resolutions as many are always wont to do on this day. They make typical resolutions such as adopting healthy dieting habits and exercise regimes, and also set some spiritual goals like praying more and doing more charity. But even these are not new because we always do same every year, and may be only to break them sooner than later. As long as there is no new commitment to these, they are dead on arrival. What then is the guarantee that we will not break them this time? Unless we do something new this time, we can't get new results. So, what is new? Indeed, in the ordinary everyday events of our lives, God works new things. However, only those who dare to live in God can see the new things He does. Therefore, nothing is new today except for those who see it as a new and unique opportunity given us by God to begin anew. And when we choose to make something new out of it, we will see new and greater things. The first step is to acknowledge that we are able to see this day and year not by our own merit or efforts but by grace. If we are humbled by this, we will become more determined to make the best of this new year. It is a new opportunity God has given us to become better children of His, to draw closer to Him, to help our neighbour more, to right our wrongs and heal our broken world to make it a better place with peace. We must remember that peace only comes through the Prince of Peace, and men cannot create peace apart from God. When we do these, then there is something new. This is possible by God's grace when we embrace Him so that His blessings become always new in our lives everyday. That is why God gives Moses the formula for blessings today, to render His presence and graces new in the lives of His children who chose to do something new. So, what new thing have you chosen to do today? There is nothing new except you choose to do something new.

Whatever new thing we choose to do this year cannot be worthwhile except by God's blessings. But what does God's blessings mean for His people? God's blessings on His people does not mean fun and living without the troubles of life. It rather means God's continuous presence and protection on His people in all their doings, their relationships including the troubles they will face. Because the constant presence of the Lord is the beginning and the only guarantee of our salvation. We must strive not to lose God's presence in our lives by any means. This is especially important for us as we begin the new year since it is only opportune to begin it with this assurance of salvation which comes from the presence and protection of the Lord. Today we must therefore commit ourselves to remain in His presence throughout 2022 so that we can enjoy His protection and those blessings on our lives, upon our loved ones, family members, friends and well-wishers, and that the new year will indeed be new for us all. Let us not approach the new year as we normally do, not as just but another new year, but truly as a new opportunity to be maximized. Those who see the new year as an opportunity make haste to maximise it just like the Shepherds upon receiving the news of the Saviour's birth from the angel, hurried off quickly to encounter Him in the manger. May we also encounter God in this year 2022.

As the shepherds went away glorifying and praising God, so too will it be for us who choose to make this new year truly new by seeing it as an opportunity to do what is new and good. What is new is to put off the old garment of sin and put on the new garment of righteousness so that submitting ourselves to live in the Lord's presence and under His protection, He will truly make us new as we will be enabled to receive the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. And having received the Spirit we will enjoy His blessings and be able to overcome all the trials and the challenges that the new year will put before us. Not by our own might, but by the grace and power of God since we will become His sons and daughters and heirs to His kingdom as St. Paul tells us. It is then that the Lord will honour us when we invoke Him in the words of the psalmist, 'O God, be gracious and bless us.' As we pledge to make this new year truly new and better, may the Lord bless us and keep us, may He let His face shine on us and be gracious to us, and may the Lord uncover His face to us and bring us peace in this new year and in the days to come. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.