

## **Holy Mother of God B/2015**

The readings of this first day of the Year talk about God's blessing. They show that God is the source of all the blessings we enjoy in this life, because it is his dearest will that we might be blessed. They show in particular that the sending of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of God's intention to bless us and to give salvation to the world.

The first reading of the book of Numbers describes the way the Israelites were blessing each other according to the recommendations given to Moses by God. It shows in particular that the reason why the Israelites invoked the name of God on them, namely for safety, favor and peace.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is the bestower of the blessings that human beings enjoy in the world. Another idea is the truth that safety, favor and peace of people depend on God alone.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as it describes the visit of the shepherds to the manger to see Jesus, the blessing of God and the savior of the world. First of all, the Gospel says that once the angels left the shepherds, they rushed to Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph and the baby, Jesus. Then, it reports on what the shepherds did by making known the message received about the baby, as well as it gives the reaction of the people at what the shepherds told them. After that, the Gospel reports on the reaction of Mary who kept everything in her heart while the shepherds, returning to their duties, were full of praise to God. The Gospel ends with the ceremony of the baby's circumcision and name.

What can we say about this feast? Today I want to talk about God's blessings in our life. Let me start from a simple experience of life. In fact, we all wish that our beloved ones might be well and everything they undertake go well. For instance, when they have a test to pass for their school or an interview for a job or a driving test, we easily say: "Good luck", or "All the best", or "My prayer is with you", etc.

However, we know also by experience that as sincere and heartfelt as our wishes might be, their fulfillment does not depend on our simple good will in pronouncing them, but on the ability and performance that our beloved ones display at the moment of the test. In the end it comes to this truth, namely that there is an element of uncertainty we cannot control. In spite of our good will, the success of our beloved ones does not depend totally on us. We do only what we can do, but we leave the remaining things into the hands of the Almighty God who can take care of them in the best way.

At the beginning of this New Year, we have to bear all that in our mind as we enter a new period of time without knowing how it will end. The only thing we are sure of is that God has promised to bless us as he has already started to do so in sending for us his Son, Jesus, into the world to be our savior.

It is certainly God's intention that we who invoke his name might be blessed with safety, peace, health and all the good things we wish for our life. I believe that this is exactly the point of the book of Numbers. However, we have always to remember that God's time is not human time, because his calendar does not correspond to ours. Our calendar goes from January to December, from Monday to Sunday, from the first to the thirty-first.

His calendar is different, because it obeys other laws than human laws. It is according to that divine calendar that St Paul says that when the fullness of time came, God sent his son into the world. The consequence of such biblical insight is absolutely clear. In fact, according to the human calendar, we would like things to be fixed right away and without delay or we would like to obtain what we want right away. But if for God one thousand years is like one day and vice versa, it changes the whole picture of the happenings of our life. Therefore, things are not always and will not always be as we wish. They might come to us in a different way than planned.

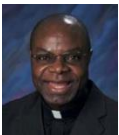
That is why I always think that when we make the lists of the things we wish to do for the year, we have to leave a little bit of room for the unknown. To do so is not to be lazy or to drop our arms as though we do want to assume the full responsibility of our future, on the contrary, it is to be wise. Because at least we show the awareness that the success of our enterprises does not depend totally and completely on us, but also on God's blessing upon us when his time is fulfilled.

The challenge we all have here is that of trusting God and his word. That is why I also think the faith of the shepherds is worth noticing today. When they were told about the birth of a child who is the savior, they did not claim any proof to that. When they came to Bethlehem and saw the baby, they did not see something extraordinary through which to recognize him as different from their own babies. And yet, they believed and trusted the word of God brought to them by the angels. We need that type of faith at the beginning of this New Year so that whatever might happen to us, we welcome it in faith.

We have also the faith of Mary and her example. In fact, the Gospel says that, as things were happening around her and people were talking about her baby, she was reflecting on them in her heart. At this title, Mary gives us all an example of interior life and meditation. That is very important at the beginning of this year, because among the events which will occur, some will be joyful and sorrowful. But, we have to put them all in the hands of God, looking in them, the will of God for us. Then, we will understand why the Church dedicated the beginning of each here to Mary, not only so that she intercedes for us as she takes care of us, but also so that we take her as a model of our faith.

Let us pray, then, that God helps us to trust him in everything that happens in our life. May we put our life into his hands and ask him to bless us. May Mary intercede for us so that like her we do the will of God in our life! May God bless you all!

**Numbers 6: 22-27; Galatians 4: 4-7; Luke 2: 16-21**



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