

Today we celebrate two feasts. One is the feast for all people regardless of nation, and religion, that is New Year. The other one is very important for us Catholics, that is the feast of Mary, the Mother of God. Why do we celebrate the feast of Mary, the mother of God on the beginning of the year? It's because we need the care, love, help and protection of the blessed virgin Mary, our mother throughout the year. We begin the year with the grace of Blessed virgin Mary. So the New year invites us to live with the grace and love of the blessed virgin Mary.

The name "January" comes from the Roman god "Janus", the god with two faces, one looking to the past and the other looking to the future. This is indeed a time to look back at the year that has just ended and to look forward to the new year ahead of us. As we begin the New Year let us thank the Lord for all the blessings we have received from Him. we need to ask a few questions to ourselves. How did I spend this one year of my life that has just passed? Did I use it to advance my goals and objectives in life? Did I use it to enhance the purpose of my existence? Could I have done better last year in the way I invested my time between the demands of work, family, friends and society, and the demands of my spiritual life? What things did I achieve last year and what did I fail to achieve? Through soul searching questions like these we find that a review of the past year naturally leads to setting goals and resolutions for the new year. We must set goals and make resolutions as a necessary conclusion to our review of the past year. And we do need to review our lives from year to year because, as Socrates says, the unexamined life is not worth living. We see the traffic signal on the road, red, yellow and green lights. It tells us that we should stop, be attentive and proceed. It is not only for the vehicles on the road but also to all of us on our way of life. Our life is a journey on the road to God, in which there are signals and which we must follow. We need to stop, be aware and proceed.

The gospel today presents Mary to us as a model of new life in Christ that all of us wish for ourselves in the new year. There we see that Mary was prepared to do something to realize this goal. What did she do? We read that the shepherds, when they went to adore the Child Jesus in the manger, told all that the angels had said to them. **"But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart"**. Again after the boy Jesus was found in the Temple, we are told that **"His mother treasured all these things in her heart"**. Mary was a woman who valued the word of God, who treasured it and made time to meditate and ponder it. Mary made an effort in order to cooperate with the grace of God. She pondered the word of God in order to discern what God was saying to her at every stage in her life as the handmaid of God. Mary found the word of God both in divine revelation and in her own experiences. Similarly God speaks to us every day through divine revelation that is through the Bible, the teaching and preaching of the Church, as well as through our personal experiences. We have to reflect on them as Mary did. Whatever the situation in which we find ourselves - a hardship, a disappointment, a decision to make - God has a solution, an answer that is right for us. We tell God about it in prayer but we also listen to what God has to tell us about it. Prayer is a conversation with God but sometimes all we do is just to read out the list of our problems to God without listening to what God has to say to us. Let us today resolve to

listen more to the voice of God, to treasure God's word and ponder it in our hearts. Then shall we be able to realize our new year resolution of a new life in union with God.

Let's try to deepen our devotion to Mary, the Mother of God and ours. Let us pray that the Lord be with us in every moment of our lives, give us love, peace and joy and help us in our effort to achieve individual growth, in our good relationship with in our families and with others and in unity in society.