



Homily – Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God 2012ⁱ

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*Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angeles
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My brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is so good for us to gather this morning, on the first day of 2012, to thank God for all of his gifts in our lives, especially the gifts we have during the past year.

So as we thank our good God for all his graces and all his tender mercies in our lives, let us also ask him today for the grace we need to continue loving him and serving him in this New Year that is beginning, that we may live our faith in Jesus Christ with even more courage and obedience.

As we stand at the “doorway” about to enter this New Year, we also know that it is the last day of the Octave of Christmas, eight days since Christmas.

This gives us the confidence we need to begin our New Year with optimism and joy. Because we have seen the Child in the manger at Bethlehem and we have believed in the Christmas promise — that our *God is with us*, that he has come into our world to stay, that he will be with us until the end of time.

My brother and sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ is with us! Nothing can separate us from the love of God! Jesus has promised to be with us always in his holy Catholic Church! And Jesus keeps every promise!

Jesus is with us today in this beautiful Cathedral, and whenever we gather in his holy Name. He comes to us in his Word and in his Sacraments, especially in the holy Eucharist. He comes to us also in our brothers and sisters, seeking our love especially in those who are suffering and those who are in need.

My brothers and sisters, the promise of Christmas is that our God loves each one of us — and that he has a plan for our lives — and that he will love us until the end of time!

And that is what New Year’s is all about — *time*. And that is what our lives are about. Our lives are a gift of time, a gift that we receive from God.ⁱⁱ And on New Year’s we always stop to reflect and ask ourselves, What are we doing with the time we have been given?

That's why it is fitting that we start this New Year by honoring Mary, the Mother of Jesus and the holy Mother of God. Because through Mary, time was given a new beginning and a new purpose.

In our second reading for this holy Mass, we heard St. Paul say: "When *the fullness of time* had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman. . . . so that we might receive adoption as sons."

Through Mary, our Almighty and eternal God was born in time — to show us that our time is for God. Through Mary time has been sanctified. Time is now, for you and me, a beautiful opportunity to live as *children of God*.

This is what our readings are all about today for this holy Mass.

In our first reading today, from the Book of Numbers, we hear that God's plan for history, and his design for each one of our lives — is a great plan of *blessing*.ⁱⁱⁱ God tells his priests to bless his people through his holy Name. He tells them to pray:

The Lord bless and keep you!

The Lord let his face shine upon you and be gracious to you!

The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!

God's great plan of blessing is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. That's what the Gospel for today's Mass tells us.

We heard how Mary and St. Joseph, when eight days have passed, bring their Child for circumcision. And they give him the name, *Jesus* — the *name* the Angel told them before he was conceived in the womb.

Through the holy Name of Jesus, God blesses his people with every spiritual blessing.^{iv} In Jesus, God looks upon us kindly and gives us the *Prince of Peace*. In this Child who lies in the manger, our God lets his own face shine upon us!^v

The blessing of God is this beautiful gift for our lives — that we can see God's face and know his peace; that we can be *children of God*!

So let us thank God today for this beautiful gift that we receive through Mary, our Blessed Mother. Let us thank him by making our New Year's resolution: That we will try with his grace, and with the help of our Blessed Mother, to truly live as *children of God*.

To be good children of God, we always need to learn from our mother. In our Gospel passage for today, we hear how Mary contemplated Jesus with a loving heart; how she kept reflecting on his words and actions.

This is a lesson for us. We should pray and read the Gospels every day. Because in the Gospels we find Jesus. Like Mary, we need to always keep listening to his words and we need to always keep following the example he gives us.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called *children of God*.”^{vi}

That’s why, on the first day of the year, we also celebrate the World Day of Peace. Because to be children of Mary and children of God, means we must be instruments of God’s peace, bringing his peace and justice to our world.

Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, in his message for this year’s World Day of Peace, reminds us that peace does not just happen. We have to *make* peace. We have to *educate* ourselves for peace. We have to learn to be less selfish and more compassionate; we have to put aside our pride so that we can work with others in a generous spirit of self-sacrifice.

My brothers and sisters, every year is a beautiful gift from God!

God’s gift is this time of our lives. We have this precious time to love and to do good; to make peace; to build his Kingdom, the city of love and truth and justice.

This year, let us truly be a people who make time for God — with our hearts open to our Father’s love for us; with our hands always open and ready to serve our brothers and sisters in love. Let us make the most of our time, to really live as *children of God*.

So let us ask Mary, our Blessed Mother, the Queen of Peace, to intercede for us that we will use our time wisely in this New Year — to grow in our spiritual life and in our practice of our faith; so that we can be good children of God and share God’s peace and joy with others.

I pray that Jesus, the Prince of Peace, may grant each one of you and your families — and everyone in our city and in the whole world — a real and lasting peace and a truly happy New Year.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us!

ⁱ Readings: Num. 6:22–27; Ps. 67:2–3,5–6, 8; Gal. 4:4–7; Luke 2:16–21.

ⁱⁱ James 4:14.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Catechism*, 1077–1082.

^{iv} Eph. 1:3–6.

^v John 14:8–9.

^{vi} Matt. 5:9; Luke 10:6.