

New Year's Day 07

1. Today is the Feast of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God. It is also the World Day of Peace. It is also the first day of the New Year. Such an abundance of titles makes me turn in the opposite direction. I look for simplicity in the midst of such abundance. I look for one or two things to latch onto as we begin this new year and celebrate Mary's Motherhood and the World Day of Peace.

2. One or two themes. We could do worse than begin this new year with an act of thanksgiving for all the gifts we have received. They vary with each one of us, but let us mention the most obvious ones, gifts which we hope most of us share. The gift of family: What a blessing a family is every day of the year, but especially at moments of great celebration such as Christmas and today. So we thank God for our families, and we pray for those who don't have family. The gift of health: we do not appreciate it until we don't have it. A prayer is here in order for those who do not have this gift, that the Lord may soon give it to them. The gift of work: work is our way to express ourselves, support ourselves and contribute to society. We thank God for it and pray that God will soon give this gift to those who don't have it now. So we thank the Lord for these three great gifts: family, health and work, and ask

that those who do not know have these gifts may soon be given them.

3. All these gifts are gifts for here and now, although they extend their influence to the afterlife as well. For we are who we are because of the relationships which make us our lives, and our strongest relationships are those of the family. Health and work also have a lasting affect for us, for again we are who we are because of our health and work, or lack thereof. In a word, the one we become forever is the result of these three earthly gifts.

4. But there is one final gift, the Christmas gift, we could call it, and it is described in today's second reading. It is the gift of himself to us by God, and its result is that we become part of God and his family because in Jesus God has become part of us and our human family. This is the Good News we have to share with the world. God is one of us, and so there is nothing to fear, neither now nor forever.

5. A pious soul e-mailed Christmas greetings to me and others the other day and reminded us to spend sometime at the crèche. It is a good reminder. We can simply look at the child there and repeat for ourselves and in our own words the message of Paul's Letter

from which we have read this morning. We are now children of God, indeed sons of God, because the Word of God has become one of us. Let us ponder what this means! Let us quietly rejoice in the Good News that we are now part of God's family.

6. Paul adds: "God has sent the Spirit of the Son into our hearts crying out, "Abba, Father." And so now we can reduce everything to one word, repeating it often in our minds and hearts: Abba, Father.