



The Holy See

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD
WORLD DAY OF PEACE

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

*Saint Peter's Square
Monday, 1st January 2018*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

On the first page of the calendar of the new year that the Lord has given us, the Church places, as a splendid illumination, the liturgical solemnity of Mary Most Holy. On this first day of the solar year, we fix our gaze on her, to resume, under her maternal protection, the journey along the paths of time.

Today's Gospel (cf. Lk 2:16-21) leads us back to the stable of Bethlehem. The shepherds arrive in haste and find Mary, Joseph and the babe; and they make known the message given to them by the angels, namely, that that Infant is the Saviour. All are astonished, while "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (v. 19). The Virgin helps us understand how the event of Christmas is to be received: not superficially but in the heart. She shows us the true way to receive God's gift: to keep it in our heart and ponder it. It is an invitation offered to each of us to pray, contemplating and enjoying this gift that is Jesus himself.

It is through Mary that the Son of God assumes corporeity. But Mary's motherhood is not reduced to this: thanks to her faith, she is also the first disciple of Jesus and this "expands" her motherhood. It will be Mary's faith that provokes the first miraculous "sign" in Cana, which contributes to raise the faith of the disciples. With the same faith, Mary is present at the foot of the

Cross and receives the Apostle John as her son; and lastly, after the Resurrection, she becomes the prayerful mother of the Church on which the power of the Holy Spirit descends on the day of Pentecost.

As mother, Mary plays a most important role: she places herself between her Son Jesus and the people in the reality of their sacrifices, in the reality of their poverty and suffering. Mary intercedes, as in Cana, conscious that as Mother she can, rather she must make the Son aware of the needs of the people, especially the weakest and most impoverished. The theme of the World Day of Peace, which we are celebrating today, is dedicated precisely to these people: “Migrants and refugees: men and women in search of peace”, this is the motto for this Day. I would like, once again, to be the voice of these brothers and sisters of ours who invoke for their future a horizon of peace. For this peace, which is the right of all, many of them are willing to risk their lives on a journey that in most cases is long and perilous; they are willing to endure hardships and suffering (cf. *Message for the World Day of Peace 2018*, 1).

Please, let us not extinguish the hope in their heart; let us not smother their expectations of peace! It is important that from all, civil institutions, educational, welfare and ecclesial bodies, there be a commitment to ensure to refugees, to migrants, to all a future of peace. May the Lord allow us all to work in this new year with generosity, with generosity, in order to achieve a more supportive and welcoming world. I invite you to pray for this, as along with you I entrust to Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, the newly begun year 2018. The elderly Russian monks, mystics, used to say that in times of spiritual unrest it was necessary to gather under the mantle of the Holy Mother of God. Considering so much unrest today, and above all migrants and refugees, let us pray as the monks taught us to pray: “We fly to Thy protection, O Holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O Glorious and Blessed Virgin”.

After the Angelus:

Dear brothers and sisters, at the commencement of 2018, I address to all my cordial wish for all good things in the new year, to all of you! I would like to thank the President of the Republic of Italy for the wishes he addressed to me last evening in his year-end Message and which I wholeheartedly reciprocate, hoping that the people of Italy may have a year of serenity and peace, illuminated by God’s constant blessing.

I would like to express my appreciation for the many initiatives of prayer and action for peace, organized in every part of the world on the occasion of today’s World Day of Peace. I think, in particular, of the national race that took place last evening in Sotto il Monte, promoted by *cei*, *Caritas Italiana*, *Pax Christi* and Catholic Action. And I greet in particular those participating in the “Peace in all lands” rally, promoted in Rome and in many towns by the Sant’Egidio Community. Dear friends, I encourage you to carry out with joy your commitment of solidarity, especially in the

peripheries of cities, to foster peaceful coexistence.

I offer my greeting to you, dear pilgrims present here, in particular to those from New York, to the musical band from California and to the *Pro Loco* group from Massalengo.

To all I renew my wish for a year of peace in the grace of the Lord and with the maternal protection of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. Happy new year. Enjoy your lunch, and do not forget to pray for me. *Arrivederci!*