

REFLECTION FOR JANUARY 1

Getting to the end of a year and beginning a new one is a time of evaluation, thanksgiving and setting new goals for the future. In Christian terms, it is a season not only to look retrospectively on the past year while asking God's forgiveness for our shortcomings, but also to thank God for all the graces received and to entrust to Him the new year. As we begin the new year 2023, perhaps the following wisdom saying of Blessed Fulton Sheen would help us set our priorities right: "Never forget that there are only two philosophies to rule your life: the one of the cross, which starts with the fast and ends with the feast. The other of Satan, which starts with the feast and ends with the headache." As Christians, the only way to a successful, thus happy life, is to be close to Christ and grow in holiness through the Cross. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* sheds light on this as follows: "The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Spiritual progress entails the asceticism [self-discipline] and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes." (CCC #2015).

On New Year's Day, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. She is also our mother and is ever close to us to lead us to her son and teach us to always say "yes" to God. Let us turn to her often throughout the new year and ask for her intercession; she never disappoints. May this ancient blessing from the Old Testament book of Numbers be upon each and every one of us throughout the new year, so that we become more united and loving as a community, ready to bring our spiritual and material contribution to build up the body of Christ that is at Ste. Anne parish:

"The Lord bless you 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!"

Let me sum up this reflection by inviting us to make ours this prayer:

Lord, thank you for a new year. May everyone in our family be willing to begin anew with a clean slate. We know that you are always ready to forgive us. Help us to be willing to forgive ourselves and to forgive one another. As we begin a new year, remind us of our truest values and our deepest desires. Help us to live in the goodness that comes from doing what you want us to do. Help us to put aside anxiety about the future and the past, so that we might live in peace with you now, one day at a time. Amen.

Welcome to 2023 and Happy New Year!