

Sunday, January 1,
Feast of Mary Mother of God

A New Year! And an old blessing from today's First Reading:

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!
Numbers Ch. 6

Happy New Year!

The old year has come and gone. It has no more potency. It lives on for the most part in memory. Quite to the contrary, the New Year is all potential. May we enter it with hope filled hearts.

Once upon a time there was a maiden; she lived in an old and somewhat primitive time and place:
...In a hut, 10 feet by 10 feet with a dirt floor.
...She went each morning to draw water from the well.
...She ate only two meals a day often consisting of barley wheat, soups, cheese, pomegranates, olives,
Sometimes there was milk, and sometimes wine,
...There also could be figs, nuts and on special occasions, dried fish or meat.
...She was unaware of her potential. *

And yet from the figs, nuts, barley bread that she ate, God fashioned a Son!
Yes, the body of Jesus came from the earth just as yours and mine did.

His Spirit came from above. But the womb of Mary bore him and he came into this world poor.
And so we call her, "Mary, Mother of God."

And today, we celebrate the *Feast of Mary, Mother of God*.

She said "Yes!" to God's plan for her.

We have a theological name for such a plan: "Providence."

So too, we ourselves have potential. Indeed all of our potency is a divine gift.
And the Spirit of God nudges, not shoves us towards giving birth to beauty.

“Providence” has put us where we are—at this gateway to a New Year.

It is an apt time to ask:

What am I grateful for? And for what do I hope?

A little story: On December 21, I came back from a marvelous cruise. I had been with family: my cousin Rosemary, a rare opportunity for me. I had the rewarding opportunity to minister to six passengers in various stages of battling cancer; I was immersed in interesting people.

Then on Christmas Eve morning, I found myself totally alone and in a funk. I was given no opportunity to be celebrant at any parish mass. I would not preach on Christmas, and my only opportunity to preside at mass would be that evening, at a mass I would say in Spanish. (The only word in Spanish that I really know is “cervesa.”)

I felt both cut of, lonely, and angry. Not a great preparation for Christmas. So I went out to the nearby lake. (As some of you know, as we age, Christmas can be difficult.)

At the lake, I sat and took in the beauty. “Look at the birds of the air. “
said Jesus.

And then I thought of David Letterman’s list! So I started to make a list of what I had to be grateful for. It got longer and longer and began to bring light into the shadows. Among my list would have to be some of my talents. They are a narrow vein of gold, but I have been able to mine them and I can still dig into that mine in the New Year. I am grateful.

Christmas Eve I said my Christmas mass in Spanish. At the end I told my acolyte, I would love to dance around the altar like you do, but my knees won’t allow it.

“That’s Ok Padre, so we dance slowly for you!” And so we did.

On Christmas Day I celebrated with my Arizona family, the Burbachs and I was out of my funk on a beautiful day.

As we all make our providential journey through each year it is through lights and shadows. May the New Year lead all of us out of shadows, ever onward towards the Light.

And we each have to potential to cast light into dark places.

And so we thank God for the potential each of us possesses and we thank God for the potential of something new in a brand new year.

- The description of Mary's life style is taken from *The Catholic Companion to Jesus*, By Mary Kathleen Glavich, published by ACTA. I recommend it to get a Picture of the lifestyle of Jesus.

Breakfast Sharing: What do you think Mary was really like?

Personal Reflection: What do I hope for in the New Year? What is the golden potential which I possess that might well be mined in 2012?