



The Holy See

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

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

*Saint Peter's Square
Tuesday, 1st January 2019*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning and Happy New Year to all!

Today, the eighth day after Christmas, we celebrate the Holy Mother of God. Like the shepherds of Bethlehem, we remain with our gaze focused on her and on the Child she holds in her arms. And in this way, by showing us Jesus, the Saviour of the world, she, the mother, *blesses* us. Today Our Lady blesses all of us, everyone. She blesses the journey of every man and of every woman in this year that is beginning, and that will be *good* precisely in the measure in which each one will have welcomed God's *goodness* which Jesus came to bring into the world.

In essence, it is the blessing of God who gives substance to all the good wishes that are exchanged in these days. And today the liturgy brings back the ancient benediction with which the Israelite priests blessed the people. Let us listen carefully; it states: "*The Lord bless you and keep you: The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you: The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace*" (Num 6:24-26). This is the age-old blessing. The priests would repeat the *name* of God, 'Lord', three times, extending his hands toward the people gathered. In the Bible, in fact, the name represents the very reality that is invoked, and thus, 'to place the name' of the Lord on a person, a family, a community, means offering them the beneficial force that flows from him. In this same formulation, the '*face*', the face of the Lord, is named twice. The priest prays that God 'make it shine' and '*lift it up*' toward his people, and thus

grant them mercy and peace.

We know that according to Scripture the face of God is inaccessible to man: no one can see God and remain alive. This expresses the transcendence of God, the infinite greatness of his glory. But the glory of God is all Love, and therefore, while remaining inaccessible, like a Sun that one cannot look at, his grace shines on every creature and, in a special way on men and women, in whom he is most greatly reflected.

“When the time had fully come” (Gal 4:4), God revealed himself in the face of a man, Jesus, “born of woman”. And here we return to the icon of today’s celebration, which we have shared: the icon of the Holy Mother of God, who shows us her Son, Jesus Christ, Saviour of the world. He is the Blessing for each person and for the entire human family. He, Jesus, is the wellspring of grace, mercy and peace.

For this reason Saint Pope Paul VI wished that the first of January be the World Day of Peace; and today we celebrate the 52nd, which has as its theme: *Good politics is at the service of peace*. Let us not think that politics is reserved only to government leaders: we are all responsible for the life of the ‘city’, for the common good; and also, politics is *good* in the measure in which each one does his part *in the service of peace*. May the Holy Mother of God help us in this daily task.

I would like all of us to greet her now, by saying three times: “Holy Mother of God”. Together: “Holy Mother of God”, “Holy Mother of God”, “Holy Mother of God”.

After the Angelus the Holy Father added:

Dear brothers and sisters, on Christmas day I addressed a message of fraternity to Rome and to the world. Today I renew it with the wish for peace and prosperity. Let us pray for peace every day.

I thank the President of the Italian Republic for the expressions of good will he addressed to me last evening. May the Lord always bless his lofty and valuable service to the people of Italy.

My cordial best wishes go especially to you, dear people of Rome and pilgrims who are here today in Saint Peter’s Square, so numerous! This seems like a canonization! I greet the participants in the “Peace in all lands” event organized by the Sant’Egidio Community. And here I would like to express my appreciation and my closeness to the countless initiatives of prayer and of commitment to peace on this Day which is observed in every part of the world, sponsored by ecclesial communities; I recall in particular the one that took place yesterday evening in Matera.

Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, may the Lord allow us to be artisans of peace — and

this begins at home, in the family: artisans of peace — each day of the new year. And I wish you, once more, a happy and holy year. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch.

Arrivederci!