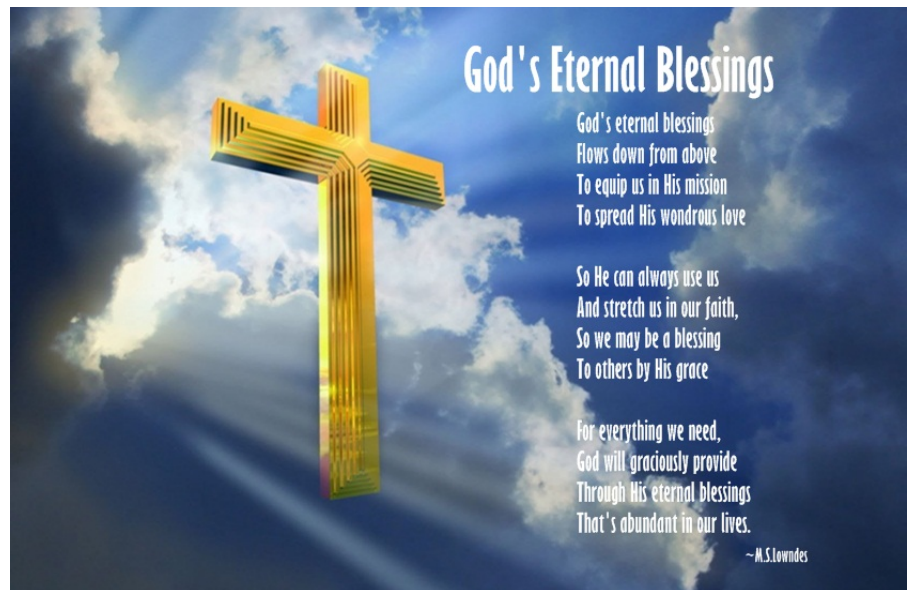


At the threshold of the New Year

We are still in the Festive Season, joyously celebrating the birth of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. In Jesus is the fulfillment of all the promises of God. God pitched His tent among us and became 'God



Immanuel' in order to save the humanity from all that is evil; to heal us and to help us experience His abundant life, to manifest the love and mercy of our Heavenly Father and ultimately to lead us to our eternal Home.

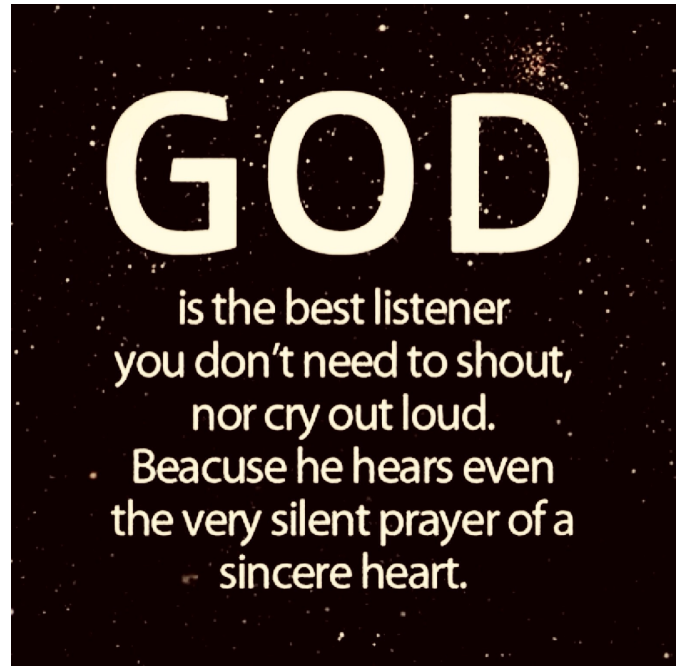
We (in the Liturgy of the Latin Rite) started the month of January with the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God on the 1st of January. This is the highest title of Mother Mary. When the Virgin Mary visited Elisabeth, hearing the greeting of Mary, Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord comes to me?" (LK. 1, 41-43). Let us be grateful to our Church for celebrating the Solemnity of 'Mary, the Mother of God' at the very outset of the New Year, on the octave of the Feast of Christmas. When Jesus entered into the world (from the moment of conception), Heavenly Father chose Virgin Mary as the Mother of His Son. At the death of Jesus, Jesus gave the same Mother to all his disciples and she became the Mother of all believers.

On the 3rd of January the Church celebrated the Holy Name of Jesus. In fact the month of January is dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus, the name given to the Son of God by the Heavenly Father, through the Archangel Gabriel. The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said: "Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit and will bear a son, whom you shall call 'Jesus' for he will save his people from their sins" (Mt.1.21). Let us become more aware of the power of the name of Jesus, which is the name above all other names.

The solemnity of Epiphany is celebrated 12 days after Christmas that is on the 6th of January. When it falls on a week day, the Solemnity is kept on the following or previous Sunday for the convenience of the faithful; this year on the 8th of Jan. The three Kings who came to Bethlehem to adore the Holy Babe were led by a star. The star can symbolise the inner light that guided them to the Saviour. Let us also recognise this inner light in us and, in this New Year, may we be ever ready to take every step guided by that 'star' which God is sending in our lives path.

The Season of Christmas comes to a closure with the celebration of the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord on the 9th of January. When Jesus had been baptised by John the Baptist "suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased'" (Mt. 3. 16, 17). He received baptism on behalf of you and me, in order to ask pardon from the Father for the sins of humanity which He has created. Yes, the heaven which was closed when our 1st parents, Adam and Eve disobeyed God, was opened at the time of Baptism of Jesus who, "when came into the world said: I have come to do your will, O God" (Heb. 10.7). We who are baptised with Jesus, also share in this mission of doing our Father's will. May the Holy Spirit of God strengthen us in fulfilling this mission in every walk

of our lives.



As we are at the threshold of this New Year which we are privileged to enter in, may we glorify God with our lives, with more zeal and commitment for the kingdom of God, which is doing the will of God. "Let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith" (Gal. 6. 9, 10). As we live for the glory of God, "God will restore the years which the swarming locust has eaten" (Joel 2.25).

Mary Pereira.