

# HOMILY ~ MARY, HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

## JANUARY 1, 2025

The name January comes from the Roman god, Janus, who has two faces, one looking backward and one looking forward. That is what we do as we start a new year, look back over the past year and look forward to the next. In the Gospel reading today, Mary just gave birth to Jesus; and the shepherds came to her telling her all of the things the angels told them, and *“Mary kept all these things reflecting upon them in her heart.”* She prayed about them, a particular type of prayer where she spoke with God and listened to him. As we look backward and forward at this time of the year, I suggest that *you keep all of these things, reflecting upon them in your heart.*

As we look backward, we tend to look at all of the difficulties, the failures, the sins. Because of our negativity bias, that is what we tend to do. I am going to suggest that you look also at the positives, the things that went right, the times that you cooperated with God’s grace. That is where you will find God in the past year. This will help you have a sense of gratitude. It will help you learn how God works in your life. He tends to work through our human nature rather than imposing his will upon us. It will also strengthen your faith that he will continue to help you in the future.

Looking forward, we tend to make New Year’s resolutions today. There is a difference between your wishes and your resolutions. Wishes are what you hope to accomplish. Resolutions are your road map on how to get there. Pray about it and pick one wish. If you pick several, your energy and attention will be divided; and you will be unlikely to make any of them happen.

I am going to suggest that you keep track of this on your calendar. I want you to turn to December 31 of 2025. Write your wish, what you hope for on that day. You can accomplish your wish in the coming year, and you can remind yourself of that next New Year’s Eve. I am going to give you a wish as an example, but you will pick your own. My example is that I will spend one hour in personal prayer every day.

Next, you will prepare your road map on how you will get there. If you are not praying at all right now and you try to pray one hour every day, you are going to get discouraged; and you will stop within a week. Decide when you are going to start. There is nothing magic about January 1st. The holiday may be a bad time to start. Maybe start Sunday, the beginning of the week. Remember that 43% of what you do every day, you do by habit and never think about it. That is why you continue to repeat past behavior. You want to be very purposeful about starting a new habit. Something you will do in the future without thinking about it. The more you repeat the same thing in the same way over and over again, the more likely this will become a habit.

I am going to start with praying 15 minutes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. I am going to pray the first thing in the morning. Pick a time that works for you but make it the same time every day. I am going to start with reading the Sunday Gospel every morning. Pick something to get you started that works for you. Maybe your favorite prayer, a decade of the Rosary, a brief meditation from “Jesus Calling,” something to get you started but make sure it is same thing every day so you do not have to think about it. Spend some time talking to God and listening to God. Find something that rewards this prayer immediately. I am going to make my prayer area very pleasant. Look outside, light a candle, play soft music. My prayer environment is a place where I look forward to spending time. Write it on your calendar on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and keep track of whether or not you do it. If you do not do it one day, do not beat yourself up over it. Tomorrow is another day. If you are unable to do this most days, you may have been too ambitious. Change your roadmap. You are in control. If you do it for a couple of months, it will be a habit. Write it in on your calendar and after two months, change your road map. I did this with prayer but you can do this with exercising, losing weight, improving your relationships, getting more involved in Church. You can accomplish your wish; *just remember to keep all these things, reflecting upon them in your heart.*

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim