

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

Mary, Mother of God, Mother of Peace

At this time of year, you will almost undoubtedly see some sort of cartoon, usually political, that includes the characters of Father Time and Baby New Year. It may even include a caption with Father Time saying something like, "Kid, you don't know what you're in for. I looked like you a year ago." While these cartoons can be humorous, they speak to one reality that we know about time, and the passage of time: the end of one year or era gives birth to another. As this is true, it seems appropriate that, on New Year's Day, we should honor Mary – the Mother of Jesus – under the title of Mother of God.

Let's examine this a little further. Mary and Joseph were part of an earlier era, and not just because they were a generation before Jesus. Mary and Joseph were part of the People of Abraham, under the Covenant of the Law of Moses. They, like the Israelites of their time, were waiting for a Messiah. It is from this holy couple that a new era begins – with Jesus, who *IS* the long-awaited Messiah. However, it is because of Mary's *fiat*, or "Yes," to God's request through the angel Gabriel, that she became the Mother of Jesus and, therefore, the Mother of God. "The angel said to her [...], 'The [H]oly Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.' [And] Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.'" [LK 1:35, 38] With that "Yes," a new era, a new age, a new covenant was born in Jesus.

New Year's Day will also mark the 52nd World Day of Peace. The Holy Father's Message for New Year's Day will express his hopes for peace for our world. In each Message for World Day of Peace over the last 51 years, Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis have all shared how apropos it is for us to consider peace on this Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. The full definition of peace is not just an absence of war or violence. It is also not simply tranquility. Instead, true peace is a right relationship with oneself, with others and with God. In our Gospel for the Solemnity, Mary is shown as peacefully reflecting on the wonders of her Son. "Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." [LK 2:19] Her willingness to share her Son with shepherds and the Magi shows her right relationship with others. And Mary's faithful response to the Annunciation shows a right relationship with God. In addition, one of the titles of the Messiah, which we heard on Christmas night, from Isaiah's prophecy is Prince of Peace. [IS 9:5] Given that title for Jesus, it would make sense to also call Mary, Mother of Peace.

In this New Year, may God bless you with faith, hope, love...and true peace!

