

31 December, 2020

HOLY HOUR FOR NEW YEAR EVE

Sign of the Cross:

Introduction:

Our God often turns upside down the tables of our expectations. At the close the year 2020 and the beginning of the new year 2021, we evaluate, where are we? Have we progressed on our pilgrim journey in a year ruthlessly governed by COVID? Or have we challenged our faith to pull down COVID by using new learnings from COVID to take control of our lives and way of living. Today, let our hearts express that joy in the words of Jesus when after speaking to the crowds from Simon's boat, he invited the Apostle to *"put out their nets into the deep for a catch"* (Lk 5:4). Peter and his companions **trusted** Christ's words, and cast the nets. *"When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish"* (Lk 5:6). These words invite us to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future with confidence and hope. We do so as the scriptures remind us that *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever"* (Heb 13:8).

Hymn: We are here to praise you

On the surface level it may appear that there are not many things to thank the Lord for in the year gone by. When we look around us, we see the manipulation and deformation of key concepts such as democracy, freedom and justice. We also see the distortion of history; a selfishness and indifference toward the common good. We also see around us unemployment, farmer's crises, racism, growing poverty. We are still recovering from the global pandemic of Corona19 and still a suitable vaccine is yet to be found. This is the world in which we live, yet God who created the world, dreams of a fitting home for his Son where he will be at home with his people in a special way. He perhaps in 2021 will be searching our hearts. This dream is a surprising and humanly unimaginable mystery; kept secret for many ages but revealed in Christ. On this feast day of Mary Mother of God, we honour her as Mother of God, who offered an immaculate space for God to take on human. **Her "yes" to God's** request makes it possible for us to say our **"yes" to God's invitations to dwell in us**, no matter how reluctantly we may do so. During this Holy Hour is it you He is searching for?

Opening Prayer: For our opening prayer we will reflect on **Ps 116:1-14**.

In the psalm, we are reminded of the psalmist who expressed his thanks to God. He also thanks the Lord for the love that he constantly experienced all the days of his life. Now, let us pause and reflect on the past year, all the events... the incidents... the people we came across... through whom and which we experienced God's love and blessings. When we look closely, we will discover that the Lord has not left us. We have a God who will never abandon us.

Let us now listen to the Psalm and joining in with him to express our love and gratitude for all the Lord has done for us, let it be an expression of our act of faith, love and hope in the Lord. As we silently listen to the words of the psalm, let us personalize it and make our own.

Our Response will be: Great is your love toward us, O Lord!

I love the LORD, because he has heard
my voice and my pleas for mercy.
² Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live. **R/-**

³ The snares of death encompassed me;
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.

⁴ Then I called on the name of the LORD:
“O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!” **R/-**

⁵ Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;
our God is merciful.

⁶ The LORD preserves the simple;
when I was brought low, he saved me. **R/-**

⁷ Return, O my soul, to your rest;
for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

⁸ For you have delivered my soul from death,
my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling;

⁹ I will walk before the LORD
in the land of the living. **R/-**

¹⁰ I believed, even when I spoke:
“I am greatly afflicted”;

¹¹ I said in my alarm,
“All mankind are liars.”

¹² What shall I render to the LORD
for all his benefits to me? **R/-**

¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the LORD,

¹⁴ I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people. **R/-**

Hymn: O give thanks to the Lord, call on ...

Scripture: Lk 10:30-37 (To be proclaimed from the Bible)

Reflection:

In the parable we notice how unhealthy society has become. Today we are ready to turn our back on those who are suffering, the frail and vulnerable. We are invited to be like the Good Samaritan. What will my response be? In which areas of my life am I willing to move out and be a Good Samaritan to others? **Pause**

The Church invites us to become neighbours to others. Let us pray for grace and strength that we may be able to overcome our prejudices, our personal interests, and cultural barriers that prevent us from being neighbours to everyone. **Pause**

We all are co-responsible in creating a society that is able to include, integrate and lift up those who have fallen or are suffering. Love builds bridges and “we were made for love”. As Christians we are called to recognize Christ in the face of every excluded person.

- How do I interact in society with others on key concepts of such as democracy, freedom and justice?
- How do I try to stand for the truth and prevent a distortion of history?
- How would I try to shun away selfishness and indifference toward others?
- What are my feelings when I see around me all the unemployment, growing poverty?
- How do I respond to the new forms of racism and nationalism?
- What has been my learning from the global pandemic of Corona Virus? Have I been able to reinvent myself as a Home for the Son of God?

Intercessions: (Thanksgiving Prayers)

Our response will be: Lord, we praise you and thank you.

- Lord, for the beautiful world that you created and all living creatures in it. **R/-**
- Lord, for having blessed us with every Spiritual blessing and loved us **R/-**
- Lord, for your continuous presence with us all the times. **R/-**
- Lord, for fulfilling our lives with your Spirit of love and joy. **R/-**
- Lord, for the members of our family, our parish community and our neighbours **R/-**
- Lord, for all those who have touched our lives during the course of this year; especially during the time of the global pandemic. **R/-**

Concluding Thanksgiving Prayer: Almighty God, we thank you for having blessed us with every spiritual blessing in your Son Jesus Christ. Help us to open our eyes and appreciate your blessings in our lives. Inspire our lives that it may truly express your virtues in acts of faith, love and hope. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn: Be exalted

What then do we look forward to in the New Year. In the new year we can surely try to go ‘outside’ of our own worlds we live in. All of us in whatever vocation we are, be it cleric, religious or laity need to relook at our lives and allow the Holy Spirit to work and reinvent in us a lived Eucharistic Spirituality. It is only then that we will find a deeper and fuller sense of existence in life. Our spiritual lived life needs to be measured by love. Love always will lead us to seek a better life for the other.

Scripture Reading: Mt 10:34-36 (To be proclaimed from the Bible)

Reflection:

This is a very difficult saying of Jesus. But when understood in its correct context it is clear that Jesus is speaking of fidelity to our decision to follow him; we are not to be ashamed of that decision, even if it entails hardships of various sorts, and even our loved ones refuse to

accept it. As we begin the New Year, like Peter and his companions can we place our total trust in Christ? Where does our faithfulness lie? **Pause**

Christ's words do not encourage us to seek conflict. It encourages us to simply endure what comes our way by being faithful to God. Our family members should not hinder us in our fidelity to God. Whatever difficulties hardships come our way, let us pray for grace and strength that we may be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, so that, he may enable us to express our actions in acts of faith, love and Charity. **Pause and Pray**

Each one of us needs to do our part to maintain peace. It is a never-ending task. At times forgiveness which is linked to peace may be necessary. At this point if there is anyone, we need to make our peace with, let us pause and ask God to help us to forgive the person/s. To forgive is to renounce the destructive power of evil and the desire for revenge. It is just as important to remember the good of every person. **Pause and pray**

Intercessions:

Let us confidently offer up our prayers to our loving Father.

Our response: Lord, hear our prayer.

1. Lord, we pray that in the new year, each one of us will look upon each other as a brother and sister rather than look down on the other with mistrust. **R/**
2. Lord, we pray that in the new year, you will open our understanding to a better world vision. We pray that you will give us a heart that will stand in solidarity with all those who suffer. **R/**
3. Lord, we pray for all those in authority, that in the new year they will try and find a solution to the attacks on individuals fundamental human rights, such as social exclusion. **R/**
4. Lord, we pray that we may find a solution to the problems of marketing of organs, tissues, weapons and drugs; sexual exploitation; slave labour; terrorism and organized crime. **R/**
5. Lord, we pray that all the people of the world will take recourse to dialogue and friendship in the new year rather than violence. **R/**

Concluding Prayer:

Lord, as we are on the threshold of the New Year, we have witnessed the first coming of the Son of God in the Birth of Baby Jesus.

Who can be afraid of a little child who needs to be fed, to be cared for, to be taught, to be guided? We usually talk about God as the all-powerful God on whom we depend on completely; but God wants to become all-powerless, all vulnerable God – who completely depends on us. He wants to be close to us, so close that he wants us to consume him in bread and wine that we will receive in today's Holy Eucharist. May our hearts be open to all the peoples and nations of the earth. May we recognize the goodness and beauty that you have sown in each of us, and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects, and shared dreams. Ask yourself today how can we be afraid of a God who wants to be "God with us" and wants us to become "Us with God" **Amen.**

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