

From the Pastor
January 1, 2023
The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God

A BLESSED AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

Dear Parishioners of our Beloved St. Paul:

Praised be Jesus Christ and Mary His Most Holy Mother! It has been our grace and privilege to celebrate once more the wondrous and grace-filled Feast of Christmas. At Christmas there are no teachers, we are all students once again learning the lessons of firm faith, sure hope and ardent charity. No wonder why the great Doctor of the Church and mystic St. John of the Cross, normally so serious and somewhat severe, on Christmas would take the Holy Infant from the manger and dance for joy! *Christ is born for us, Come let us adore Him.*

May I once again convey my own sincere best wishes to you and your families at this holy time of Our Lord's Nativity. And may I also express my sincere gratitude to you for all your generosity to both St. Paul's and to me not only at Christmas but all throughout the year. May God bless and reward you! I am truly a most blessed priest to be the pastor of this wonderful parish. I cannot adequately express my gratitude for all the many gifts you have given to me. I am sure you understand that it is impossible to write individual Thank You notes to so many. May this letter serve as such.

Today I would like to wish each of you a very Blessed and Happy New Year and assure you of my prayers each day and daily remembrance at the altar of God. For our meditation today I would like us all to turn to this New Year of Grace 2023.

The ancient Romans had a special god among their many gods. This god was the god of the gates and doorways. He had a face which looked forward and one which looked backward because, as we know, gates and doors both open and close. The ancient Romans called this god *Janus*. Our English word *January* comes from the name of this god, because January both closes one year and opens another. Our English word *janitor* is also derived from the name of this god, because a janitor opens and closes the gates and usually wears many keys to remind us of this function.

Our Blessed Mother is called *Ianua Caeli*, the Gate of Heaven. She closes the Old Testament and opens the New Testament. She is the last of the daughters of Israel and the Mother of the Church. (Some of you may know the beautiful Church on 101st Avenue in Ozone Park which is called *St. Mary Gate of Heaven*. As a thirteen-year-old acolyte my father, who died 30 years ago, served the Mass of Dedication of the then-new Church of Gate of Heaven in 1926. It was dedicated and

blessed by Archbishop Molloy. My father often told me that he had the whole day off from school, so solemn and long was the dedication of the Church. And so, we go to our Blessed Mother at the beginning of this New Year of Grace 2023. I can say with full assurance that this year will be for us all the best of years. I write this not because I can see the future, but because I am certain of one thing: that everything that happens to us this year, whether it be good as the world judges or ill as the world judges, will be God's will for us. And as the poet Dante reminds us, *In His Will is our peace!* Our own father and patron St. Paul reminds us that for those who love God all things work unto the good.

As we all know, the year 2022 has been a most difficult one. In a sense, the whole world has changed. But our holy faith teaches us that God permits evil only to draw from it greater good. We must most sincerely be convinced of this truth.

This is the time when we usually will make New Year's resolutions. May I suggest a few:

1. Attend Mass on every Sunday and Holyday of Obligation
2. Confess our sins once each month
3. Pray the Holy Rosary daily
4. Invoke the assistance of St. Joseph each day
5. Pray daily to Our Guardian Angel to guide and protect us
6. Practice one act of self-denial each day
7. Practice one act of mercy each day.
8. Begin and end each day by signing ourselves with the sign of the Cross
9. Do not say everything that comes to mind particularly when it is critical and toxic.

May I once again wish each of you all the blessings of God in this New Year and assure you of my gratitude and prayers. Please pray for me.

In Jesus and Mary,
Monsignor James F. Pereda