



*Dear Friends,*

On this New Year's Day we honor Mary under her most ancient title -- Theotokos, God-bearer. This is the oldest feast of Mary in the Church, honoring her by her first and primary title, "Mother of God." In accepting her role as mother of the Messiah, Mary became the first disciple of her Son, the first to embrace His Gospel of hope, compassion and reconciliation.

As a New Year begins we look to Mary as one who did not merely enter into a new year with the birth of her Son, but entered into a new age. Today she invites us to join her.

For what, then, are you seeking in 2017? What blessings are you hoping to receive from the Lord? As you answer this question, consider the blessings the Lord told Moses to speak to Aaron and his sons for the people of Israel:

As God offered Israel His divine protection through His presence, so, too, does He offer His protection to us, looking kindly upon us and granting us peace. As children of God through baptism we have a relationship with Him that allows us to call Him Abba, Father, as St. Paul writes to the Galatians. We are heirs to God's kingdom because of our adoption through Jesus Christ, and as heirs, God's desire is to give us every good gift, most especially the blessings of His protection and peace throughout this New Year.

With Mary may we hold onto the hope of all that God has revealed and promised through His Son. May we hold onto the blessing of His protection. No matter what we encounter in this New Year, may always remember that our gracious God is with us offering us His peace.

Happy New Year!

*Father John*