

# Pastor's letter

New Year's Day 2010

Dear parishioners,  
Best Wishes for a New Year of Peace and Happiness.

Last Sunday, when I started to reflect upon what I was to write in the today's pastor's letter, a question came to mind: "Would it be better to write the letter for New Year's Day or for the first Sunday of the year?" I decided to write the letter for New Year's Day for three reasons. The first reason is that on this day we celebrate the feast of Mary, Mother of God, to whom I am particularly devoted. The second reason is that today is the World Day of Prayer for Peace founded by Pope Paul VI on January 1, 1968. The third reason is because I want to wish all of you a wonderful 2010 full of joy.

Today's Gospel introduces Mary in a state of meditation: "*But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.*" (Luke 2. 19) Mary meditates on what is happening to her - why all these people, shepherds and Wiseman, come to visit her child. She asks herself what it all means. Mary, a young and inexperienced girl, wonders what God is doing with her. Why has God chosen her even when people considered her little bit more than insignificant? The answer is that the evaluation criteria that God uses is very different than that of human beings. "*Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart.*" (1 Samuel 16. 7)

God chooses for His projects people, that human beings with their bright intelligence would never choose. "*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.*" (Matthew 21. 42)

When we try to reflect on our styles of judgment, of evaluation, we may notice we are distant from the way in which God judges. For example, with our children, in the area of schoolwork, we praise them by how intelligent they are, if they like to study; rarely do we worry about how much effort they put into it just to make their parents happy. In the area of sport, we praise them if they play hockey or soccer well, if they are competitive with other children; rarely do we appreciate their enthusiasm and their honesty.

Let us now also take into consideration the criteria of evaluation we use as adults with other adults. With our acquaintances or neighbors, we praise what type of job they have, we try to understand how much money they earn; rarely do we worry if they are happy. In the area of work, we praise the managerial abilities of our boss, we are envious of the person that has a place of great prestige, yet rarely do we worry how many more worries he or she may have in that role compared to us.

We could find many more examples that show us, people of the 2010, that we are so far away from the criteria of evaluation that God displays. The criteria of evaluation of God are different. "Does that person believe in love?" or "Is he available?" or "Does he bring himself where I want to bring him?" God has for everybody a marvelous project. However He cannot do it if we don't trust in Him, if we continue to direct our life without opening up to Him, without asking Him for directions to live our lives better. God can work only in those who trust in Him, only in those who are available to His project, only to those who say like Mary, "*Here am I, the servant of the Lord...*" (Luke 1. 38) In other words Mary said to God, "It's all right, I don't know where you want to bring me, but I trust you. Direct my life and I will follow you!"

People like Mary, Joseph, and the great saints of history trusted in God, they put their lives in God's hands, and they made themselves ready wherever God wanted to bring them. I am sure that each of us, every day, has experienced God, knows how to recognize Him and follow Him. Still someone might ask, "I don't know how to recognize God in my life. How can I do so?" When our thoughts are simple and pure, when reading life around us doesn't need great words, when meeting others doesn't mean needing to defend ourselves from them... right there is God.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this letter, this first day of the year our Church proposes it be called World Day of Prayer for Peace. I believe that our world is really in need of peace. To be Christian means to have a heart full of peace, a peace that comes from God to give to the others. Only a heart in peace can bring forth the peace around it. Let us try, starting from tomorrow, to have attitudes of peace, words of peace and looks of peace. Starting from tomorrow, let us try going to our places of work without guns on our tongues, just peace with our smiles. Let us try giving the best of ourselves, not the worst. If we make this jump of quality, it will be very easy to live this life.

To finish off, I would like to suggest to all of you to do something for me. In these first days of the year try to remember and see all the pieces of your life in 2009 when God has spoken to you, and unite all those pieces together. Having done that, try reading the message that God has given you for 2009, and with that Divine Message, start off 2010. God didn't choose only Mary and Joseph to follow Him, God chose everybody. He has chosen you and me. We just need to say: "Yes!" and follow the message that He has given to us. Happy New Year!

Peace, Father Luciano