

The MONTHLY

January 2018

Pastor's Corner: FACING THE NEW YEAR

Happy New Year! The celebration of the New Year is not new. Why the ancient Romans celebrated New Year's Day. In fact, the Romans celebrated the entire first month of the new year in honor of the Roman god Janus. The name *January* means *month of Janus*. Janus was the god of doors and portals; he was the doorkeeper for the coming and going of things. According to Roman myth, Janus opened the gates of heaven at dawn and closed them at dusk. Our English word *janitor* originally referred to a doorkeeper and is derived from Janus. There is a stone sculpture of Janus in the Vatican museum (shown here) which depicts him with two faces. Both faces are bearded and quite severe in countenance. One face gazes passively into the past and the other gazes passively into the future.



Bust of the god Janus

The Church starts her new year by celebrating the *Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*. When we hear someone is a new mother, we immediately ask questions about her baby. Family and friends may go to the hospital to visit the mother, but the one they are eager to see is the newborn child. There is something in our very nature that draws us to a newborn. And a mother, by her very nature, takes joy in showing off her newborn child to family and friends. Celebrating Mary, the Mother of God, allows us to come face to face with our God.

Our God is not a god of stone, our God became one like us in all things but sin. He became a child so we would never fear Him, but love Him as He loves us. Why, can any one of us imagine becoming as helpless as a newborn babe for the sake of those we love? Our all-powerful God did just that for our sake. Our God is not a Janus, staring passively into the past or the future. He is not a severe God made of stone. Rather, He is the God who is here and now, and He comes in the name of love not fear.

The face of God differs greatly from the two-faced Janus made of stone. In the *Book of Numbers*, the Lord instructs Moses on how the Israelites are to be blessed by Aaron and their priests. They are to be blessed with the words, "The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace." Our God is not a severe or cold God. He is not Janus. He lets His face shine upon us; He looks upon us kindly. There is a place in the Second Eucharistic Prayer where we remember our deceased loved ones: "welcome them [our deceased brothers and sisters] into the light of your face." Eternity will be as that single moment when we first look into the face of our God and all of our cares and worries will melt away, forever.

We celebrate this day, not a Roman god made of stone gazing passively into the distance. We celebrate our God who took on flesh so we may behold Him this day and for eternity.

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