

I'm going to ask for a show of hands. I want everybody to be honest, OK? How many people have in your wallet or purse right now a picture of some member of your family?

I'm going to talk about baby pictures here but before I do I want you to know I love babies. And quite honestly I also love seeing baby pictures. But I know that people often feel embarrassed about showing their pictures, because the gap between those who take pictures of the babies they have and those who see pictures of someone else's baby is wide. In the first week of life a baby will be the subject of more rolls of film than Bill Clinton is whenever he jogs. And it's good. Babies change so rapidly in the first few weeks of life that our instincts document the facts so we can share them with the whole family.

The Christmas season in the Catholic Church is a lot like baby pictures. So much is happening that we call the family back to church as often as possible to look at the photos again. Here's the newborn baby; that's Christmas Eve. Here's the shepherds coming; that's Christmas Day. Here's our first family photo; that's Holy Family Sunday. Here's mom holding the birth certificate; that's today, the feast of Mary the Mother of God. Here's our friends from the East Coast; that's Epiphany. And here's our baby being baptized by his cousin--oh we're so proud of him; that's the Baptism of the Lord, which closes the Christmas season.

Today's snapshot shows Mary treasuring all these things in her heart. It's a reflective photo, and shows Mary at her best.

New Year's makes us reflective too as we think back on the year behind us and look forward to the year ahead. We think about the changes in our family, in our work, in our health. Perhaps we've come to know ourselves better and can see what changes we'd like to make. For example, in my own life I've become aware of a deep-seated prejudice I've held for many years--a prejudice against country-western music. Several friends have convinced me I should try to keep an open mind. This week for the first time in my life I was actually able to listen to fifteen minutes of country-western music, interrupted only by commercial announcements for the lottery and more depressing news about the weather. I think what they say is true, though; country is more appealing if you play it backwards; that way you get your job, your spouse, and your dog back again.

So if Christmas and New Year's causes you to reflect on a desire to change, I encourage you to go for it. It could bring new life to your achy-breaky heart.