

New Year 2021

FRESH BEGINNINGS

Drawing Strength from Blessings

In the first liturgical reading for New Year's Day 1 January 2021 - Mary, Mother of God, God tells Moses to share a beautiful blessing with the Israelites. Moses is to say to them: "The Lord bless you and keep you, make his face shine upon you, be gracious to you, give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).



How are we going to let God use us for His Glory?

New Year's resolutions can tend to be self-centred (lose weight, work harder for a promotion, walk 10000 steps daily etc), but if God is at the centre of our resolution then there's a much better chance of success.

Here are some practical simple steps we can take this year to let God use us for His glory.

- **Listen:** Are we making time for God? Are we ready to listen? Are we reading His Word and allowing it to transform our lives?
- **Pray:** Ask God for His guidance, wisdom, and strength, daily. Praise Him, from whom all blessings flow.
- **Serve:** Be God's hands and feet in our community.
- **Share:** Our relationship with Jesus and our testimony are a powerful witness to our friends and family. What we think and how that translates to how we act are all ways to show God's love and mercy to the world.

It's okay to set goals to improve our life, but by improving the life of another, we might find ourself transformed in the process. Metanoia is the best resolution for ourselves and our loved ones. (Metanoia is a Greek word meaning, a transformative change of heart especially: a spiritual conversion).

We have been granted numerous opportunities to become more virtuous, more caring, more compassionate, more Christ-like, more faithful to the gospel which has the power to reverse all evils.

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These are astounding words that we could wish for our loved ones and friends, as well as to ourselves on New Year's Day.

The Gospel also speaks of being blessed by God. Mary felt deep gratitude for her experience at Bethlehem. God blessed her with a healthy son. Visitors were in awe of her child (Luke 2:8,15 -18). Angels glorified God at his birth (Luke 2:13-14). Mary treasured the blessings and pondered them in her heart (Luke 2:19). Mary's blessing would be her strength during the difficult events of the future.

As we enter A New Year we, too, are called to ponder the blessings of the past year despite the pandemic that affects the whole world. And to praise God for the treasures which is ours.

These blessings can be our strength in the new year. Let us turn off the TV and social media for a while, stop the noise of our lives for a few minutes, and remember the way in which God has brought us peace. Remember our own history and salvation history of how God always lead His people out of shame and misery. Can we recall how we survived our own family and personal crisis?

A New Year's Parable – *Carpe Diem!*

On the first day God created the cow. God said, “You must go to the field with the farmer all day long and suffer under the sun, have calves, and give milk to support the farmer, and I will give you a life span of sixty years.” The cow said, “It's kind of a tough life that you want me to live for sixty years. Let me have twenty years and I will give back the other forty.” God agreed.

On the second day God created the dog. God said, “Sit all day by the door of your house and bark at anyone who comes in or walk past. I will give you a life span of twenty years.” The dog said, “That's too long to be barking. Give me ten years, and I will give back the other ten.” So, God, with a sigh, agreed.

On the third day God created the monkey. God said, “Entertain people, do monkey tricks and make them laugh. I will give you a twenty-year life span”. The monkey said, “How boring; doing monkey tricks for twenty years? I don't think so. The dog gave back ten, so that's what I will do, too, okay?” And God agreed again.

On the fourth day God created man. God said, “Eat, sleep, play and enjoy life. Do nothing, just enjoy. I will give you twenty years.” The man said, “What? Only twenty years? No way, man. Tell you what, I will take my twenty, and the forty that the cow gave back, and the ten that the dog gave back, and the ten the monkey gave back. That makes eighty, okay?” “Okay,” said God. “You have got a deal.” So that's why for twenty years we eat, sleep, play, enjoy life, and do nothing; for the next forty years we slave under the sun to support our family; for the next ten years we do monkey tricks to entertain our grandchildren; and for the last ten years we sit in front of the house and bark at everybody!



Where does time go? Here we are at the start of 2021 that inevitably transitions us from one time 'tunnel' to the next. We don't know if the parable holds true. Although it has certain identifiable ring to it, where each of us could be in the cow-dog-monkey stages. But we do know that time is a gift, time is indeed precious and that the new year is always a new beginning, and that, since grace abounds, spiritual opportunity will always be around the next calendar corner.

To put it another way, this new year we will be invited to another stage of our lives, to a more profound involvement with the Holy Spirit, to a deeper degree of conversion, to a challenge of being more open to the prompting of God's Holy Graces and Blessings than we have been at the end of the previous year. And that challenge becomes increasingly more urgent as we leap into this new year. At this point in time, the world is still battling with the Covid19 Pandemic. Singapore is in Phase 3 and vaccinations are being implemented, etc. We have to seize the day – Carpe diem!

It encourages us to focus on the present, appreciate the value of every moment in life, and avoid postponing things unnecessarily, because every life counts and we have an excellent opportunity to do so *now*, then we should go, instead of finding excuses to postpone it for later. There is an old proverb/ aphorism, "*The road to hell is paved with good intentions*". A common meaning of the phrase is that individuals may have the intention to undertake good actions but nevertheless fail to take action. This inaction may be due to procrastination, laziness or other subversive vice. As such, the saying is an admonishment that a good intention is meaningless unless followed through.

It was said, we have been given, on the average, some 25,000 days to live. Some portion of that has already run out. But a New Year, remember, wipes out all of the yesterdays and offers us 365 shining new tomorrows in which to be finer, more focused, more faithful Catholic Christians. Of course, like last year, it's only an offer. To accept it has to be one of our most meaningful and profound New Year's resolutions.

Wishing everyone - A Healthy Grace Filled Better 2021!

Mary, Mother of Jesus, teach us how to ponder our treasures, how to draw strength from our blessings, as we journey into this new year.



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