

HOMILY

The Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God

New Year's Day

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Welcome to you on this New Year's Day. Did you know that New Year's Day is the one holiday that is almost universal? It's the world's most observed holiday.

I trust that you've made your New Year's resolutions, one of which is to participate in church every weekend of the year and holy day. I won't ask if you've resolved to lose the weight you gained between Thanksgiving and Christmas or if you're planning to rejoin the Wellness Center or if you're going to run five miles a day. I read an article that has some words of comfort for those who are setting resolutions: "Don't worry about keeping those 2010 New Year's resolutions. You only have to deal with them until February and then you can give them up for Lent!" It sounds as if the writer has been spying on some of us.

Resolutions are good, especially if there are changes we need to make in our lives. It's good to make changes, for the most part. As we are often reminded by our critics, our family and friends, none of us is perfect. In fact, some of us might have some deep regrets about the way we've lived our lives. But rather than live in the past, the New Year bids us on.

Have you ever noticed that our car's windshield is fifty times larger than our rear view mirror? We are called to spend fifty times as much energy and time looking forward than looking backwards. When we drive on I-69 or M-15, it is good to occasionally check our rear view mirror to see what is behind us. But it is dangerous to drive using only our rear view mirror. If we live mentally and spiritually only looking backwards, we will never get started to accomplish what God has called us to be and to do.

We need to take one day at a time. We need to make every day count. I am reminded of the quote that is often framed in many sacristies:

*Lord, help me to live today
as if it were my first day,
my only day, my last day.*

If we want to make every day count, we must choose a priority. What is your priority?

I believe it was Edna St. Vincent Millay who once shared, *"I know that life must go on, but I forget just why."* We sometimes miss the great priorities of life because we get sidetracked. I once heard a tale of a talented bloodhound in England that started a hunt by chasing a full-grown male deer. During the chase, a fox crossed his path so he began to chase the fox. A rabbit crossed his hunting path, so he began to chase the rabbit. After chasing the rabbit for a while, a tiny field mouse crossed his path and he chased the mouse to the corner of a farmer's barn. The bloodhound had begun the hunt chasing a prized male deer and wound up barking at a tiny mouse.

We mustn't forget who we are and whose we are. We are no longer slaves but the sons and daughters of God. Like slaves, once we were shackled and not free. But God has called us by name and has called us to be sharers in the life of Jesus Christ.

I'm sure you know that there is a big difference between religion and faith. Religion can be cold, lifeless, academic facts and figures. However, faith is warm; it is alive. It points to something greater than ourselves. If anything, the New Year is calling us to become more faith-filled to God, in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

I'd like to close with a prayer originally written for New Year's Eve:

*Eternal God, before whom we are creatures of the day
and children of the hours,
I lift my prayers to you
as I stand in the shadow of the waning year.
I am aware once more of the fleetingness of time,
and the transiency of my being.*

*So much has happened to me
during the year now so rapidly slipping away.
So much of hurt and happiness,
of loss and gain, of hope and fear.
I did not expect the sorrow that was thrust upon me.
I was surprised by the turn of events that changed my life.
I look back,
I remember how different life a year ago was.
The slow, quiet erosion of the days has gone on,
and I am not quite the same person I was,
for better or for worse.
I had had a whole year to grow in love,
or to fall out of love,
to turn my hands to constructive tasks,
or to turn away in idleness.
I have had a whole year,
and now it is almost gone.
No matter what I have done or failed to do,
O Lord, keep me from dwelling on it too much.
If I have failed,
help me put my failure behind me.
If I have done well,
help me to be glad but not complacent.
There are other hills to climb
and new hopes to be realized.
I know, O God, you understand my need to look back for a while,
wistfully peering at the past.
But start me looking forward.
I do not know what events are ahead,
but I do know you are there,
and I am grateful.*

Amen

