

Encouragement Encouragement

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Evolution and Revolution

THE HOST APOSTOLATE
WWW.THEHOSTAPOSTOLATE.ORG

14, GOATBECK TERRACE,
LANGLEY MOOR,
COUNTY DURHAM DH7 8JJ

thehostapostolate@gmail.com

Each New Year brings us to a point of anticipation about the future. Although it is merely a mathematical notion as we can measure time in a variety of ways, it does help us to start anew...

You may have been surprised or even shocked at the title of this Encouragement. Revolution speaks of violence or war and disruption but in essence it means to turn around, revolve and change. At the start of each year we make certain changes, or try to, in our lives as appropriate. The new year may be a time of sorrow or joy, struggle or even survival- But Jesus came to change our way of thinking and in a way it was 'revolutionary' – kindness not violence, humility not pride – submission to God's will not resistance. He elevated those that others thought lowly and consorted with beggars, thieves and prostitutes. He ate with the same and shocked the establishment figures of the day, the Pharisees. Yes, what He did was indeed revolutionary as he turned things around.

He asks us to do the same but more especially to turn ourselves around and to change that which is within us or perhaps 'out of order' with His teaching... maybe over the past year we have become complacent, become self-sufficient and have accepted all faults and sins with a kind of resignation. Of course, some of these will take some shifting and we have to accept that we are not perfect, but that is a far cry from being reluctant to let them go and to do something about them. This may cause a thunderstorm in our hearts. None of us like to own our faults, but we are called to do so. How many times did Jesus forgive but also with the words 'do not sin any more' he cured the paralytic lowered through the roof of the house but first forgave him his sins.

What have we to be afraid of- true regret and desire to change delight God, the Father, who delights in us. He will help us. So perhaps we can resolve to revolve around His teaching and not simply shrug

our shoulders. At this time in our history we need witnesses. We need people who are striving to be better people – who quietly show an example to others by what they do and say. We are often judged by others by our actions and lives, by our thoughts and words and relationships. Today with so much publicity to be had and our personal, private lives to a degree, become public, sometimes even by our choice (Face book etc.) it is vital that we deliberate on the impact this has on others. We are in the spotlight as Christians whether we like it or not. In a doubting world it is easier to discredit than to accept the possibility of truth. How often when someone is judged is their allegiance to a church brought out and emphasized.

But how can we revolve and turn ourselves around. Lent is often thought of as a time to do this and so it is, but conversion, revolution should take place daily and after the Joys of Christmas, during the deep mid-winter perhaps a new year can lead us to a new beginning.

Let us look also at another word, Evolution. Once again, we think of creation and the debate as to who was responsible for it and how. We think of where we have come from- have we simply changed shape, size or were we some other form before this one. There are many theories concerning this matter, some more dubious than others and all to be treated with a certain degree of caution as being definitive and final...

Last month we had the wonderful discovery of 'Little Foot' so named because the skeleton of this woman had tiny feet. This skeleton was nearly three and a half million years old and looked pretty much as we do now. I pondered what the person was like not just the bones. But there is a deeper point to



evolution. Every single person evolves. We go from babies to children, teenagers, young adults, middle years to old age to very old age. We change – we grow, we develop. However, there is a profundity about change and evolution. We also evolve spiritually. We are each made to reflect the Creator. We are perfectly made and are destined for perfection. We are called to be masterpieces. He is the Potter we are the Clay. He offers us the means to evolve using all the attributes he has given to us. We are not made in the image of someone else, a star, hero, but a perfect version of the prototype, a best version of ourselves. It is wonderful to see a person being themselves and being used for that task that only they can fulfil. We each have a job to do, a way of being, that no one else can do. It is so important to realise that by grace we improve – we grow, and we evolve into the person that God knows that we *can be* and *should be*. It may take a life time or a short while. We do not evolve into someone else. We do not need to strive for the gifts that others have but to use the gifts and attributes that we have been given. We do not have to be envious of others or jealous of their success. When St. Bernadette was asked what she could do or did in her community she replied poignantly... 'I am just sick' What amazing acceptance of her role and purpose by which means she also brought joy to others.

I hear people saying how such and such has changed, mellowed over years, maybe when older when they have just left behind the incomplete person they were. We have to look at ourselves honestly and recognize what we are and have.. . We need to change that which prevents us from being ourselves completely. If we are selfish or self-centred we never learn to love others and cut off possibilities for happiness. If we want to change our appearance we make ourselves different, but this can lead to a grotesque version of ourselves which we can only maintain at cost... if you are reluctant to use the gifts you have, you may bury them trying to mimic the gifts of others.

So in this 'new year' be ready for change. Change the things that thwart and hinder you but change into the perfect unique person that you are meant to be. Turning upside down and inside out the prevailing trends which bind us and do not allow ourselves to evolve into something better.

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Maybe this year you will have an 'epiphany' a showing to yourself of your true worth. Maybe this year will lead us to use the graces God wants us to have. Be happy, be content and grow more perfect.... Happy New year.

Halina Holman



Pope Francis

Annual Examination of Conscience...

The Christian vision of time is linear, not cyclical. The passing year is therefore a step on the way towards a reality that is to be completed, another step toward the goal that lies ahead of us. It a place of hope and happiness, he added, because we will meet God, the reason of our hope and source of our joy. Examine your consciences: Have we used the past year mostly for ourselves, for our own interests or did we know to spend it for others, too? How much time did we set aside for being with God, in prayer, in silence, in adoration? I invite everyone to look toward the new year, grateful for what we have received, repentant for our failings and resolute to work with God's grace to better our lives, our communities and ourselves. Rome

Evangelization:

That Christians, and other religious minorities in Asian countries, may be able to practise their faith in full freedom.

Prayer...*Thank you Lord for giving me the brand 'new year' ahead. Help me live the way I should as each new day I tread. Give me gentle wisdom, that I may help a friend. The year ahead is empty, help me fill it with good things. Each new day filled with joy and happiness it brings. Amen.*

Feast Days in January 2018

1st Mary, Mother of God

2nd St. Basil the Great

3rd Most Holy Name of Jesus

4th Elizabeth Ann Seton

7th The Epiphany **8th Baptism of the Lord**

12th St. Aelred of Rievaulx

18th Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity

22nd St. Vincent **24th St. Francis de Sales**

25th Conversion of St. Paul

26th Ss Timothy and Titus

27th St. Angela Merici **31st St. John Bosco**