

Encouragement Encouragement

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Expand your horizons... Never too late

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One of the great things about Saints is that they have both an open heart to God and people. As well as an open mind about how best to serve both – they often go beyond the ordinary boundaries of either service or love and have a ‘vision’ of ‘what could be’ In other words they are not afraid to follow their Master’s ‘call’ regardless of what others may think or what should be beyond their grasp in ordinary ways. For each this has been different and difficult but undaunted they persevered. Sometimes this took them to witness as Martyrs, other times to be excellent examples of parenthood. Sometimes they became founders, initiators, correctors, law and custom changers, but always with the clarity of vision that would lead them on to uncharted waters.

As we start a New Year it is worth pondering on our own call and make changes to the manner we live it out if necessary. New Year resolutions are often presented in a rather narrow fashion i.e. to spend less, watching less television, to drink less or give it up. Occasionally a life changing year is planned, such as getting married, remaining single, deciding to be a Priest/Pastor or to end an abusive relationship. These things are of critical importance, not to shape one year but a whole life time. Yet beyond even these choices should be the abiding question... How will I live this out? The actual choice is not the end but the beginning of a journey with and into God.

We are **ALL** gifted people. God did not make a mistake when he formed us and made us. He gave us special gifts and charisms and He gifts each according to the part that we are to play in the building up of the Kingdom. It is a mistake to look at the Saints and believe that somehow their lives are beyond us and our own part has to be minimal and of no significance. There are many blessed people who simply did their best with what they had, and God did the rest for He knew their strength and

weaknesses. They did not close down their hopes and aspirations, their dreams. One example is that of Blessed André Bessette, a French Canadian ‘Brother’. Coming from a poor family, always ailing, who had to beg to be admitted to religious life, and was seen as unfit to do much, compared to his more learned Brothers, was in the end given the job as door keeper. This was seen as the lowliest position requiring great patience. What he did with this is still spoke of and he is revered for the love he showed to everyone he opened the door to. He lived till he was ninety-one and there are literally thousands of cures, healings, both physical and spiritual attributed to his intercession. His kindness and generosity brought thousand to the door of this monastery. Furthermore, his vision of a huge basilica was fulfilled.

Equally we could quote St Bernadette who became the mouthpiece for the Mother of God and reaffirmed her ‘Immaculate Conception’ and led a cloistered and sacrificial life. We have the example of Zélie and Louis Martin whose daughter became known as St Thérèse teaching us about ‘The Little Way’ to God... Their other daughters too were richly blessed. Then there is Pelé- the Traveller who refused to give up his Rosary during ‘Franco’s’ reign in Spain and was martyred for doing so but before that conquered the attitudes to Travelers/Gypsies by his generosity. This list is endless.... Of course, daily we encounter people who give generously and abundantly and make something of the little they feel they have.

But perhaps the deepest question has to be ‘what can I do to further the Kingdom?’ This requires both humility and courage and a deep prayerfulness. It requires us first to believe that we have been called. NO exceptions – no utterings of ‘well I could never do that’ but an open heart to be aware of what we might be being asked to do. Maybe you are not being asked to do’ this or that’ thing that someone else is being asked to do, but **called** you are. Finding that

special thing or two is the bravest thing you will ever have to do.

There are many ways in which we can serve each other and love both God and Neighbour... if you are already doing something, think that there may be better ways of doing it or involving others, even passing on skills. If you have an idea, follow it through, do not simply dismiss it for it may be exactly what you are called to do. How many charities have been started by someone with a good idea and who simply stayed with it? Do not hide the thought with a dismissive air and negative approach... that it cannot be done or that others would criticise or laugh at us. Jesus walked a path that required great vision and he asked His followers to expand their horizons. I am sure that it would never have entered St Peter's head, the fisherman, that he would travel extensively, be a leader and end up in Rome crucified upside down! All the Apostles ended up doing what they would never have dreamt of. We are all called to be followers of Jesus. We are charged with taking the Good News to others and free people from whatever binds them. Yet all too often we ourselves limit our own potential so we are unable to help those who most need our help and we do not pass the liberating love of Jesus on through our own lives. We pass on The Good News in many ways, by example, but also by encouraging others and by telling them what motivates us and that is that God loves us and that we are called to love.

Our horizons of love should be ever expanding Jeremiah states "For I know the plans I have for you", declares the Lord "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Whatever our circumstances happen to be, we are daily enabled to respond by grace to live fully in God's love. This is not necessarily a call for 'more' but a better use of our time and talents and possibly in unexpected ways.

That '*Special Pastor*' in a recent Homily referred to going through that 'narrow door'. For children it was to be obedient, for parents, better guidance and kindness- but all of us have to go through it- and go through it we must.' +... Important words....

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That narrow door becomes an open horizon once the door is pushed open and we go through. Dare you this New Year expand your Horizons of Hope, change your perspectives and have the best lived year in God's Love?

My prayer is that you **all** do....

Happy New Year!

Halina Holman

Pope Francis

These, then, are the secrets of the Mother of God: silently treasuring all things and bringing them to God. And this took place, the Gospel concludes, in her heart. The heart makes us look to the core of the person, his or her affections and life. At the beginning of the year, we too, as Christians on our pilgrim way, feel the need to set out anew from the centre, to leave behind the burdens of the past and to start over from the things that really matter. Today, we have before us the point of departure: the Mother of God. For Mary is what God wants us to be, what he wants his Church to be: a Mother who is tender and lowly, poor in material goods and rich in love, free of sin and united to Jesus, keeping God in our hearts and our neighbour in our lives. To set out anew, let us look to our Mother. In her heart beats the heart of the Church. Today's feast tells us that if we want to go forward, we need to turn back: to begin anew from the crib, from the Mother who holds God in her arms.

Rome 2018



**'So, at last, I'm ready; I see the way.
It's to daily follow, trust, and obey.
I enter the New Year armed with a plan,
To give him my everything.
All that I am.'**

-Mary Fairchild

Feasts in January

1st Mary, Mother of God

4th St. Elizabeth, 5th St. John Neumann

6th Epiphany

10th St. William, 12th St. Aelred of Rievaulx

13th Baptism of the Lord

17th St. Anthony, Abbot

20th Second Sunday in Ordinary time

21st St. Agnes, 22nd St. Vincent Pallotti

24th St. Francis de Sales

25th Conversion of St. Paul

26th Ss. Timothy and Titus

27th Third Sunday in Ordinary time

28th St. Thomas Aquinas

31st St. John Bosco