

# IMPACT



## Beginning a new year of our Lord, 2021

Resolve to live and grow in faith in the coming year

### Grace in our midst

We begin a new year. A.D. 2021. "A.D.", "Anno Domini," is a Latin phrase which means "In the year of our Lord." Thus, two letters serve to remind us that all we are and have and will be is grace -- pure gift from our good and gracious God, each and every day.

It is good to begin 2021 by reflecting on the mystery of God's presence within and around us. Even when we do not place the A.D. before the year as we mark the date on our calendars, calling it to mind will help us to grow as people who are mindful of God's grace in our midst.

This year, let us invite the Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts, to perceive the reality of God's presence, even when doing so is difficult. We seek God's love, mercy and grace by faith, and see it when we are attentive to the many blessings of our lives, in the gift of family and friends, and in the sense of fulfillment we find in serving others.

God's presence in our lives is a gift, and bears with it responsibility. We who have been given much are called to give much in return, as good stewards of God's grace. Not out of obligation, but out of deep gratitude. When we do this, we give God glory, reflecting the perfect love and gift of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a perfect way to begin a new year, A.D. 2021.

### The Year of St. Joseph

Pope Francis has announced that we will mark this year A.D. 2021 as the Year of St. Joseph. In his apostolic letter *Patris Corde*, the pope invites us to learn from and be inspired by St. Joseph who shows us what it means to desire and follow God's will in our lives.

"The spiritual path that Joseph traces for us is not one that explains, but accepts. Only as a result of this acceptance, this reconciliation, can we begin to glimpse a broader history, a deeper meaning. Joseph is certainly not passively resigned, but courageously and firmly proactive. In our own lives, acceptance and welcome can be an expression of the Holy Spirit's gift of fortitude. Only the Lord can give us the strength needed to accept life as it is, with all its contradictions, frustrations and disappointments.



God always finds a way to save us, provided we show the same creative courage as the carpenter of Nazareth, who was able to turn a problem into a possibility by trusting always in divine providence. If at times God seems not to help us, surely this does not mean that we have been abandoned, but instead are being trusted to plan, to be creative, and to find solutions ourselves.

Just as God told Joseph: "Son of David, do not be afraid!" (Mt 1:20), so he seems to tell us: "Do not be afraid!" We need to set aside all anger and disappointment, and to embrace the way things are, even when they do not turn out as we wish. Not with mere resignation but with hope and courage. In this way, we become open to a deeper meaning. Our lives can be miraculously reborn if we find the courage to live them in accordance with the Gospel." (Patris Corde, December 8, 2020)

We begin this new year still feeling the effects of the Covid crisis, aware of our human frailty and in need of the grace of God at each moment of every day. How will you embrace new life this year with creative courage and reliance on God's providence?

## This year, remain in Christ

Look to the first disciples and learn what it means to be open to a deep relationship with Jesus.

The gospel we hear on January 17 tells of Jesus' call of the first disciples. The disciples did not know Jesus when they first approached him asking, "where are you staying?" In first century Jewish life, aspiring disciples, those who would take on the way of a Rabbi, would have proved themselves ready through years of study before asking to learn from a master teacher. The two disciples, however, had not been proven as able students. Their only qualification was a great desire to know God's ways.

Jesus understood what was in their hearts and minds and said to them, "Come and see." Responding to this call of Christ changed the lives of the two disciples, their family and friends, and ultimately, the whole world.

As the disciples journeyed with Jesus, they realized that where he "stayed" is about much more than his physical place of residence. Jesus stayed with God, returning to God in prayer at key moments in his life and ministry, showing and sharing God's love in word and deed, and leading his disciples to do the same. Jesus did not stray from God's ways, even when doing so led him to death on the cross.

The two disciples remained with Jesus that first day. As he anticipated his passion, Jesus urged his disciples to remain in him. In the hours before his arrest, he asked them to stay with him. Jesus asks us to do the same-to remain in his love, becoming more like him each day.

This year, let us make a commitment to remain with the Lord, trusting in his goodness, resting in his care when we are weary, finding strength through the Holy Spirit when we are uncertain, and reaching out to others with the hope that is only found in Christ.

## IMPACT THIS MONTH

As you begin this new year, make a commitment to remain in the Lord, trusting that God will guide your heart and mind and will be with you every step of the way. Prayerfully read 1 Samuel 3:7-10 as you discern how the Lord is calling you at this time.

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'"

To what do you perceive the Lord is calling you?

Resolve to desire and to fulfill God's will in the course of your daily life.

## Faith NOW

*A year ago, as we approached 2020, I decided to begin a regular column in Impact called Faith 2020. I intended to build on the idea of 20/20 vision - how faith gives us a particular way of seeing and responding to the circumstances of our daily lives.*



*We may be anxious to put 2020 behind us, but before we do, it is important for us to look back at what most would describe as the most challenging year of their lives and to reflect upon what we have learned or will take with us into 2021.*

*The year 2020 may have indeed helped us to have clearer vision - a deeper appreciation for the way in which our faith in Jesus Christ is our foundation, our strength and our courage. Perhaps we enter into the new year with greater appreciation for the gifts of life and faith, family and friends. Some grieve the passing of a loved one or the loss of a job. We are more mindful now of our human fragility and the strength of the human spirit. And we begin this new year in hope that the virus will be abated and we will soon be able to celebrate at the Eucharistic feast in communion with Christ and one another.*

*Let us begin this new year with renewed commitment to live as disciples and grow as good and faithful stewards of all that has been entrusted to us. May 2021 be a year in which we know and share the goodness of the Lord. May we live faith NOW.*

*- Leisa Anslinger*