

Encouragement *Encouragement*

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Resolving to Change

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Returning from a pre-Christmas visit to family which turned out to be a series of mishaps en-route, delays, non-arrival of trains I started to ponder about the New Year and what this would bring in terms of surprises, news, good and bad, personal and global.

We are not the authors of the future or is all knowable to us. We often set forth blindly and hope and pray that all will be well for us, our friends and families and circumstances – but, we have more control over things than we think but only if we have complete trust in God and know that He leads us and guides us.

Strange word, ‘control’, for in reality it requires us to do the very opposite of what the word implies, and that is to let God determine our present and future. If we let go we will discover a wonderful certainty of His love and care and a future that is more certain than we think. We are people of God, His beloved, and have a destiny marked out for us of overwhelming Joy and Peace. Big problem – we have to believe this and live in that Spirit.

As the New Year starts we can also reflect on one other aspect of destiny. We are called to be holy and yes, this is also within our grasp. Much of the many ‘unhappinesses’ are caused by our own choices and preferences which do not bring us to that place where the Spirit of God dwells – but into darkness and sadness. We can choose to live in the light of God’s Promises or in the darkness and emptiness of despair.

Today we have the threat of war, disease and unrest. Groups of people seem to be at odds with each other and peace is threatened. There is a need for reconciliation, understanding and healing. So often not admitted is our desire to have our own way and insist on our preferences as being superior to others while all the while acting from interior and exterior pain which motivates us. We have not only been

Baptised but confirmed in Faith, strengthened by grace, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Many of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are simply not utilised in our everyday lives and we battle on without drawing on those gifts which bring interior peace, recollection and resolution.

Like many aspects of our spiritual journeys, these charisms are not recognised within ourselves and therefore not used for our own and others’ benefit. We have not only side-lined them but are in danger of offending the Holy Spirit by our denial of their efficacy and necessity.

Let us take the straightforward gift of healing. How many people ask for the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick or attend services for the same? How many people believe that they can be healed by it either in both mind, body or spirit. Do we believe in miracles or simply relegate them to the ‘cute’ stories about Jesus’ ministry, and perhaps those of the Apostles? Do we dismiss those who are truly engaged in this work and who see it as an imperative of service both in praying for and with those who need our love and support? We often pray in a manner which is underpinned by doubt – even if we do believe that instant healing is possible. Miracles happen, we think, then but not now – it’s all a fable, some say. *In a world blighted by so much would a loving God abandon His people without the means of recovery?*

We may put our hope in so-called ‘faith healers’ – only to be disappointed, forgetting that it is not the instrument but the hand of God that does the healing, but He does use our hands, eyes, thoughts and desires. We may have hope in those who have been blessed in this way, for example Saints who intercede for us and to help us, but forget that we are all called to do this work which brings amazing restoration and blessing. Many with this vocation can testify to the blessings received by the giver.

“The wise men are models of conversion to the true faith, since they believed more in the goodness of God than in the apparent splendour of power.”

Pope Francis, Epiphany 2015

In the 1930's a lady called Kathryn Kuhlman was called to this kind of dedicated service. Dedicated to 'The Word' which she believed changed lives. She also let the Holy Spirit so overwhelm her that believing utterly in the Mercy of God, she saw thousands upon thousands, many who were not Christians returned to mental and spiritual health. Thousands testify to the graces received and the blessings fill volumes. Unassuming- knowing her own frailty, she travelled at the Lord's instruction and in her rather dramatic but humble manner she saw, each time to her own amazement, the Power of the Holy Spirit (1930-1975).

We have those who work tirelessly for Justice and Peace, stepping into dangerous territory. We have those who reconcile enemies and often pay the price. The Holy Spirit of God is always with His Church. He has given us extraordinary power to help each other by means of our spiritual gifts. We are taught about the Spiritual works of Mercy... *How many do we do????*

All healing brings us back to the source of authority, God Himself. We receive healing in many forms, and we do so daily. We are required therefore to go out and do this for others. Healing can mean spiritual, emotional, yes, and even physical... often requiring no more than an eager ear and prayer.

A good New Year resolution would be to decide not just to do 'this and that' but to be actively engaged in works of reconciliation, reparation, peace-making, promoting real justice, the Godly kind, being a bearer of Mercy and wholeness to others. We do not have to do astonishing things or stand on a platform, although we have to sometimes respond to that call too. Fear is the contradiction of the Presence of God in our lives. "Do not be afraid" was a constant call of Jesus. When the Apostles and Disciples received the Holy Spirit in fullness they became bold and fearless in proclaiming the truth.

Should perhaps, this year of all years (The Year of Mercy) be characterised by a bold Spirit of Love and Tolerance, Healing and Compassion? All words – yes, if we let them remain as mere words and thoughts, cannot and will not let the Holy Spirit overwhelm us with zeal.

Please feel free to copy and distribute unaltered

May the New Year bring all blessings and a rejuvenated call to be bold Christians.

Halina Holman

'We cannot fathom the wonders of God nor analyze the super-natural manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit in the healing of the physical body or the transformation of a life - but we thank Him for His tender mercy and great compassion as we bring our requests to Him in prayer.'

Kathryn Kuhlman



William Morris

Royal Presents

The offerings of the Eastern kings of old
 Unto our Lord were incense, myrrh and gold;
 Incense because a God; gold as a king;
 And Myrrh as to a dying man they bring.
 Instead of incense (Blessed Lord) if we
 Can send a sigh or fervent prayer to You,
 Instead of myrrh if we can but provide
 Tears that from penitential eyes do slide,
 And though we have no gold, if for our part
 We can present You with a broken heart
 You will accept; and say those Eastern kings
 Did not present You with more precious things.

Nathaniel Wanley

Beneath the window of the papal apartments **Pope Francis said**

"In this theme of searching in faith, under the guidance of the Spirit, The Magi testify that Jesus came to earth to save not one people, but all peoples. Therefore, in today's feast our gaze broadens to encompass the whole world, that everyone everywhere might celebrate the 'manifestation' of the Lord to all people, that is, the manifestation of God's love and of the universal salvation," He offers through His son.' Rome, 2015

Feast days in January.

**1st Solemnity of the Mother of God, World Peace Day
 3rd Epiphany (England and Wales)**

10th Baptism of the Lord

18th Week of prayer for Christian Unity

21st St. Agnes

25th Conversion of St. Paul

26th SS. Timothy and Titus

28th St. Thomas Aquinas