

Holy Christmas: Day 7 New Year's Eve A New Year's Examen

On this last day of the year 2020 my thoughts turn to looking back at the days & months past. What a year this has been – pandemic, isolation, sorrow & suffering, and even hope. I have been trying in my Benedictine life to examine each day where God has been a part, and how have I served God and others in the day. Each night during this “examen” I ask God’s forgiveness where I have not been or done as I should in glorifying God; and, reminding myself of God’s marvelous grace, mercy and forgiveness as I thank God for the day past. Days and nights have sometimes been difficult

So here we are on the eve of an old year passing and a new year beginning. Another year into the first decade of the 21st century. A year we are glad to see behind us and wondering what the next brings. The atmosphere of New Year’s Eve usually doesn’t lend itself to too serious of a reflection. But, for a moment in this turning of the calendar and I offer some examination for our spiritual life.

Sr. Judith Suter, OSB in her book, “Advent & Christmas – Wisdom from St. Benedict” gives some reflection for a “New Year’s Examen”; she references from The Rule of St. Benedict:

Do not aspire to be called holy before you really are, but first be holy that you may more truly be called so. Live by God’s commandments every day; treasure (purity), harbor neither hatred nor jealousy of anyone, and do nothing out of envy. Do not love quarreling; shun arrogance. Respect the elders and love the young. Pray for your enemies out of love for Christ. If you have a dispute with someone, make peace with that person before the sun goes down. Never lose hope in God’s mercy.

(The Rule, Chapter 62-64, 72)

As this old year passes and a new one begins, I pray that in any way that I have not served Christ by loving family, friends, colleagues, and others I have encountered – Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy. Where I have not treated others respectfully, or been jealous or envious of another – I ask God’s forgiveness. Where I have failed to reach out to those in need, I ask God’s grace to be more open and loving. Where I have been helpful to someone, may God alone be glorified.

St. Paul shared with the Church at Ephesus – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as (God) chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before (God) in love.” (Ephesians 1:3-4)

May this be our prayer entering a new calendar year – to be holy! And, as I learned years ago from a Spiritual Director in an Episcopal School of Spirituality – “to be holy is belong to God, be filled by God, and serve God”. We embraced that vision in the West Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church several years ago seeing persons on a “journey of Christ-like holiness”.

Sr. Judith Suter shares this prayer:

God, who graciously gave us Jesus and calls us to be your children, I praise you for the grace you have lavished upon me. Bless all those who do not know your love in their lives and those who are burdened by loneliness and despair. I pray that I may grow in holiness each day and know that you are with me. Keep me mindful of your presence at all times, help me to see your son Jesus in everyone, that I might help to bring his kingdom to the world. Amen.

Happy New Year! And, may God continue to lead and guide us into a hopeful future! And, may we never lose hope in God's mercy.

William H. Wilson (Bill)+