



Hopes and Dreams for the New Year

Jesus said: "Don't worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough troubles of its own" (Matthew 6:34). The year 2020 has had enough troubles of its own. Still, from a certain perspective, they may have been a blessing. Despite the human tendency to fixate on what we have lost and cannot do, you may have a deeper appreciation than you did a year ago for what you DO have and what you CAN do. Lacking physical contact with loved ones, you may treasure the times you are able to be in contact with them more. You may have a clearer sense of personal priorities in life and increased compassion and understanding for others going through difficult times. People typically turn to God more when things aren't going so well than when everything is going great. Between the problems and having more time on your hands, God may have been the recipient of some extra prayer time. In perspective, 2020 may have been a really great year!

The challenges and adjustments to "normal" life we experienced in 2020 will accompany us as we transition into the New Year. Nevertheless, with the turn of the calendar page (for you who remember printed calendars) we naturally look forward to what 2021 will bring. What are your hopes and dreams for the New Year? I put that question to folks back in Minnesota and here in Venezuela. Many, of course, mentioned good health, prayer for loved ones, better living conditions, and an end to the pandemic. Here is a sampling:

For good health and growth in faith for myself and my family, better job opportunities, especially to resonate and feel more joy in prayer (MN) ★ To be together again with my daughter, dreaming of the day she might return, for my 86 year old dad and siblings, for liberty, democracy and a better future and quality of life (VEN) ★ To get back to bible study...live more in the moment...let go of what I don't need anymore...be kind and generous to all...be the hands and feet of Jesus (MN) ★ That we be prosperous and safe, reflecting Jesus in our daily lives with humility and simplicity, and love one another with peace and tranquility (VEN) ★ To gather full-faced and singing together as a family...next Thanksgiving and Christmas, setting our table for 17 instead of 2 (MN) ★ To be reunited with family who had to leave due to the economic situation that has beset our country (VEN) ★ For the kids, may they see more adults modeling cooperation, kindness, selflessness, and a greater appreciation of all the blessings we have (MN) ★ That we be enlightened with the light of our Lord to educate and guide our children to be good children and grow to be great men and women. That our country shed the yoke of oppression (VEN) ★ To restore civility in our political scene here and around the world (MN) ★ To leave this country (VEN) ★ To find a new job...and that there not be so much necessity for people to leave our country, suffering problems in other countries (VEN) ★ That we evolve into really being part of one another, interdependent, past the evils of racism, sexism and all the other "isms" that plague our world (MN) ★ For a global ecological conversion that all people would care for our common home the earth as a gift from God (MN) ★ on a practical level, I'd rather not use zoom to talk with people in 2021 (MN) ★ To meet my future wife who will take good care of me (VEN) ★ That I get connected with an old guy with lots of money (VEN)

These responses...mostly serious, some on the lighter side...express the hopes and dreams so many share, but there was one particular response from a friend whose family recently left Venezuela for Spain that best gave voice to the dream that the pains of the past year might be transformed into hope for the New Year.

The past months I have felt as though I haven't even been alive, finding nothing positive here. I go to Mass and pray, but I don't feel anything. Why am I so unhappy with my life? My daughters find joy in lots of things, making me think if they, being children, know how to be happy, I should do the same. So I have decided that this coming year I am going to live intensely, not new things but seeing what I already know and live as though it were something new. The pandemic will continue. The government may not change. The clouds, the world, the rivers may be the same. What we have the power to change is ourselves, to see things differently, to find value in the simplest things and give attention to the beauty in the smallest details. So I have decided this Christmas to become like a little child awaiting the baby Jesus and whatever he brings me in the New Year.

What a great attitude for us all as we transition into the new year with blessings and challenges of its own.

Points to ponder

What can you do, what attitude will help, to make your hopes and dreams for the New Year become a reality?

These "Did you know?" papers are designed to give you a better understanding of life in Venezuela and to strengthen connections between the parishes of the Archdiocese and their archdiocesan mission during our 50th anniversary year. Please direct any comments or suggestions for future papers to Fr. Denny Dempsey at ddempsey@churchofst dominic.org or 651-368-7324.