

January, 2019

Impact

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.

Impact this month

Invite God to be the Lord of your life and home in this new year. If you live with others, pray together:

Let us praise the Lord of days and seasons and years, saying: Glory to God in the highest! And peace to his people on earth! Our lives are made of days and nights, of seasons and years, for we are part of a universe of suns and moons and planets. We mark ends and we make beginnings and, in all, we praise God for the grace and mercy that fills our days.

Remember us, O God; from age to age be our comforter. You have given us the wonder of time, blessings in days and nights, seasons and years. Bless your children at the turning of the year and fill the months ahead with the bright hope that is ours in the coming of Christ. You are our God, living and reigning for ever and ever. Amen.

From Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers, on uscgb.org

The year of our Lord

Responding to our sacred call in the new year

The beginning of a new year always holds potential – an opportunity to reflect on the year that has just concluded, build on past successes, learn from mistakes, and resolve to live with greater commitment and integrity in the year to come.

This month's Sunday readings provide particular wisdom upon which to reflect as we begin 2019. Listen carefully, and you will hear how precious we are in the eyes of the Lord and how deeply we are called to live as God's holy people in the world. We might even say that God *counts* on us to do this. We are to be light in darkness, bring healing to those who suffer, and share compassion, justice, and hope with all people. With such a sacred call, where do we begin?

Make 2019 "the year of our Lord." The letters A.D., which sometimes follow the numerical year are an abbreviation for "Anno Domini," or "year of our Lord." Make Jesus the Lord of your life and trust in God to be with you through all the circumstances you may experience this year. Turn to God in prayer as you face decisions, even little ones. Draw on Church teaching or a trusted friend or spiritual advisor when making more complicated ones.

Be mindful to give God glory in your words and actions. Reach out to others with love and care; be a peacemaker at home, office or school, and in the world. Anything that wouldn't be pleasing to God? Let go of it, stop it, learn to avoid it!



Make this year glow with love and hope

Remember that every day is a gift. Thank God for each new day and resolve to spend time wisely and well.

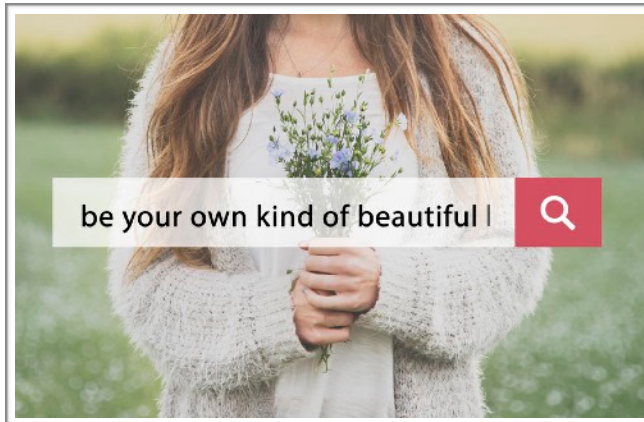
Don't sell yourself short. You have a mission, a purpose, which only you may fulfill. In the words of John Henry Cardinal Newman, "God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission - I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next."

Make 2019 truly special, a year in which you live as the Lord's very own in the world.

Upon you the Lord shines

Even when we feel small, we should see ourselves as God's beloved

For most of us, our time and attention during December was placed on finding just the right gift for the people in our lives. We may have embraced the spirit of the season by doing all we could to make small acts or gifts as meaningful as possible. At Christmas, we gave and received gifts as a sign of our love for the people in our lives.



Even more profoundly, the gift-giving of Christmas is a symbol of the great gift of God's love, which is shown to us most perfectly in the incarnation – God's great gift of becoming one with us in Christ. Maybe we do not think about it as deeply as this when we are out shopping for the dozzenth time, trying to find just the right color or size, but the care we take in the giving of gifts is a way of showing God's love to others.

We give gifts at Christmas as a sign and continuation of the love of Christ, because through baptism, our actions are united to Christ's for the greater glory of God. Hopefully, some of that care and attention went to those who have little material possessions or no one else to care for them, too. That is the sort of gift-giving that is truly a sign of Christ's self-giving love.

As we begin a new year, learn from the Magi. Like the magi who sought out the Christ-child in order to offer him homage and bring precious and unexpected gifts, each of us has something special to give, not only at Christmas. Every day holds an opportunity to share as only you can.

•Recognize your gifts: faith, the blessing of family and friends, your talents and possessions.

- Seek out the Lord in the poor, the homeless, and those who have no one to care for them.
- Remember that all we are and have are truly gifts from God, to be cared for and shared with love. This is the real meaning of stewardship, for this season and throughout all time.

Do whatever he tells you

You just might experience a miracle!

When I read the story of the miracle at Cana, I often reflect on the servers who were working behind the scenes of the wedding feast. What must they have thought when Mary came to them with her directive, "Do whatever he tells you."? Some Scripture scholars think that Mary might have been a family member of one of the wedding party – otherwise, why would she have been so concerned that they were running out of wine (which would have been a social disaster for the new couple)?

Even if she was, however, the servers might have been perplexed by her request. After all, what could Jesus possibly do about the situation? Yet, they did as Mary instructed, and were the first to experience a miracle at Jesus' hands. The large water jars were filled with wine. Not only wine, but the best wine. Through this miracle, we see how deeply God wants to be near to us in our human state, and how Christ pours out God's love lavishly, abundantly. Are you ready to respond to Mary's directive in your life? Do whatever the Lord tells you. You just might experience a miracle! - Leisa Anslinger

Leisa is the founder of Catholic Life and Faith. She and Steve are the parents of Mike and Carrie and grandparents of PJ and CeeCee.

