

*“Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” (Isaiah 43:18-19)*

Happy New Year Church. Well, we’ve done it, we’ve put another year behind us! For most of us, the onset of a new year is a time of new beginnings and setting new directions for our lives. There will be hundreds upon thousands of New Year’s resolutions made this year and most of them will include things like shedding a few pounds, getting into better shape or putting our financial houses in order. Traditionally, welcoming in a brand new year has been a time to reflect upon the past year and set a few lofty goals for the new. So this year, as we formulate our list of resolutions let’s concentrate upon keeping our focus directed toward the New Year with enthusiasm and joy. Dwelling on the past always seems to get in the way of that so let’s make a concerted effort to not reflect on all of those yesterdays too long. The New Year also brings with it an abundance of challenges and opportunities to put our spiritual houses in order. Well Christian, the New Year is upon us so we can ill afford to spend a lot of time looking to the past. Yesterday’s gone and all we have is today and all of the tomorrows that we might have left. Time’s a wastin’ and we’ve got an awful lot of work to do this year, God wants our focus to be on His work so we need to get started right now. *“No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”* (Luke 9:62)

One of God’s greatest gifts to mankind is of course, the gift of life. So ask yourself what you can do with that glorious gift to better serve Him this year? Not just today though, we need to strive to serve Him on every one of the 365 days that will make up this year and they should all begin with prayer. When you awaken to your morning prayers begin by confessing the previous day’s transgressions and asking God’s forgiveness. *“But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.”* (Psalm 130:4) As you continue to pray thank Him for the previous day, ask His blessing for the day ahead and another opportunity to serve Him. Church, we should be constantly challenging ourselves spiritually, not just one day out of the year! *“so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God...”* (Colossians 1:10) Instead of putting our primary focus on our financial or physical well-being we should be focusing on our own salvation. Our salvation is, as it should be, our long-term goal but remember this Christian, your eternity begins today! That said, let’s focus on our salvation as a *“what can I do today”* awakening to God’s infinite love and the Holy Spirit that resides within. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God has already provided us with the tools that we’ll need so, every moment of every day, let’s keep our focus on all of the love that’s within and around us. Christian, if we focus on God’s love rather than the trials and tribulations of everyday living we’ll begin to create new relationships and new friendships as we continue to strengthen those that are already in our lives. The love of God, of friends and family and the love of the world is the foundation of Jesus’ teachings. In his first letter to the church in Corinth Paul defines love in some detail when he wrote, *“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”* (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) Inspired by

God's infinite love let's resolve to continue to love and care for the family and friends that surround us and to share God's love with everyone that we encounter every day.

Father God, awaken our souls to your truth, let your love fill our hearts and your wisdom clear our minds. Let your compassion and love have a positive impact on those that we encounter on our Christian walk. Amen. This year, let's pray for the strength to meet every physical and spiritual challenges head on and, leaning heavily upon the power of the Holy Spirit, overcome every obstacle or misfortune that comes our way. *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* (Romans 8:28) Let's also pray that the Lord will rouse our spirits to a more Godly nature so that we can receive the peace and clarity of purpose that comes from a lasting, loving relationship with Christ Jesus. Prayer is key but Bible study is equally important if we ever hope to understand all of the truths that Jesus taught. Only through prayer and study will we ever be able to truly feel the depth of joy and fulfilment of His love and be able to express that love to those around us. Now, that Christian is a worthy New Year's resolution.

In 2019, as a Christian family, let's resolve to be more mindful of doing God's will rather than our own. Let's resolve to be more conscious of our words and actions and, to the best of our ability, only do good so that we don't create unnecessary suffering and sorrow for ourselves and others. Church, we need pray every day that God will teach us to restrain our anger, our greed, our pride, our personal biases and self-indulgences and, just as Jesus did, deal with the world in love and with compassion. Let's let go of the past because there's absolutely nothing that can be said or done that will undo any of it anyway, so don't carry all of that baggage with you as you embark upon the New Year. Instead, allow the Holy Spirit to direct your focus toward God's love and allow it to bring peace and unity to you, your family and those close to you.

This year let's let unity be our motto and love for one another our utmost desire for this New Year.