

Daily Devotional, January 5, 2021 Bring On The New Year With Great Hope!

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” – 1 Corinthians 12:27 (NIV)

The new year is a tremendous opportunity for each of us to get a fresh start. We look to the future with eyes wide open, hoping for a much better year than the last, and dreaming about exciting possibilities that may yet be coming. The new year helps us to hit the reset button. It is a clear calendar that upon first inspection marks a moment for us to pause, evaluate, and move forward with a renewed sense of intentionality.

As we begin to move forward into 2021, I want to suggest that we will best move forward if we give thanks for what is behind us. Most importantly, I believe we will move forward in a more productive way, if we will take time to be thankful that what is past is past, and to also be thankful for the wonderful people who have walked with us on this bewildering journey into 2021. We have not lived life alone, even in our isolation, and we will not begin the new year alone, either. Gratitude for who is with us, even remotely, will help remind us that we can move forward with confidence, knowing that we have the support of family and our church community.

I was recently reminded of the blessing that I received as I began as a pastor in my first parish. At the time, our synod was offering a program that offered mentoring assistance to smaller churches who needed to develop better health and growth patterns. I immediately signed us up for the program and was awarded a grant and was assigned a pastor from a local church who was trained in the program and who became my mentor in facilitating the program in our church. The pastor, Tony Dusso, contacted me and said he was going to come meet me at the church and take me out for coffee. I hopped into Tony's car and we made our way to the closest Starbuck's.

Tony had a number of questions ready for me, but they were all meant for getting to know me, my strengths and knowledge, and sizing up our congregation's needs and potential. But the best part of meeting Tony was that I now had made a friend in ministry who showed real interest and care and who would become a good friend who gave me positive support in a place where I knew almost no one and certainly didn't know the lay of the land. Over the next two years Tony and I would get together monthly for coffee or breakfast and would talk about life and ministry.

Tony was an invaluable friend and mentor to me, and I had a wonderful time in ministry at that parish. As I look back, I give thanks because the success and joy we experienced was due, in part, to wonderful people like Tony who invested their time and efforts to support me in my work, taking time out from his own. For that I will always be grateful.

As I begin this new year, I look forward with great hope that God will do wonderful things for all of us at Hope in 2021. My hope is grounded in the love and grace of God and the gratitude that comes as I remember I am not alone on the journey, nor or any of you. Take a moment today to give thanks for those who are on the journey with you, and who have made a difference with you. Let us all thank God for the wonderful people who have been there for us throughout this most trying year that is thankfully behind us, those who have lent their aid and support in whatever way possible and showing their care and concern. This is what church is. This is what our church is.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You for leading us to this church family. I pray that as we get older and grow yet closer that we will never lose sight that it was You who brought us together. I pray that You watch over them and keep each of them safe, Lord. May we always be accountable to one another and never demean one another but always encourage each other in both times of blessing and of trials. I thank You for my brothers and sisters, Lord. Amen