

Introduction

A new year means a new you! Can you feel it? Can you feel the hope and optimism as you look forward to the New Year 2021?

This past year has brought tremendous hardship and challenges, and so you rightly take time to reflect, to pray, and to prepare for a new year. *“Behold, I make all things new.”* (Rev 21:5)

What follows are twenty-one ways forward, rooted in this truth: *“I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly.”* (John 10:10)

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Take Off the Mask

For the sake of protecting ourselves and others from disease we have been wearing masks and other face-coverings.

These masks cover the most beautiful part of the body and they restrict our ability to connect with one another.

What a feeling of relief and peace we experience when we arrive at home and can just “take off the mask” and be fully ourselves!

Now ask yourself sincerely: “Wasn’t I already wearing a mask before the pandemic required it? Haven’t I been hiding something of myself out of shame, or out of pride, or out of fear?”

In our relationships with others we often hide our true selves. We lack confidence to speak or act according to our conscience; we fear the rejection of others; we fail to accept ourselves as we are. We “mask” what we are afraid to show another.

Take time to reflect on one important relationship in your life. What will it take for you to connect with that person more intimately, more honestly, more humbly?

What change needs to happen in your heart so that you will reveal your true self to that person?

Take off the mask!

“Wearing a mask wears you out.

Faking it is fatiguing.

The most exhausting activity

is pretending to be what you know you aren’t.”

(Rick Warren, author of “The Purpose Driven Life”)



*“If you want people to love you for who you are,
take the mask off.”*

(Quetzal)

The Pandemic BEFORE the Pandemic

CANCELLED...CANCELLED...CANCELLED...

Home alone more than ever before. For many people the cancellation of so many social activities and events greatly increased the amount of time spent alone. More and more people began to “tele-work” from home, which cut them off even more from social contact.

“It is not good for the man to be alone...” (Genesis 2:18)

The first concern that God expressed in Sacred Scripture about the human condition was that the human person not be alone. “It is not good.” Science and faith profoundly agree!

Loneliness negatively impacts many areas of our life: our health, our mental acuity, our lifespan, our happiness, our energy level, our ability to pray and live life to the full.

The pandemic of LONELINESS existed long before any other recent pandemic. Modern American life prioritizes work, individualism, productivity, activity, and busy-ness in a way that substantially reduces the amount of time we spend just enjoying each other’s company, just enjoying “be-ing” rather than “do-ing.”

Are you lonely? Do you need to change the way you live so that you spend more time with family? More time with your spouse? More time with your children? More time with your closest friends?

Less is more; less activity can mean more living. Discern now how you need to “do less” and “be more” in order to live in communion with others rather than in isolation!



“It is not good for the man to be alone...”

Genesis 2:18

We're All Sick

Doctors and nurses are so important! We recognize this most clearly when our own health is compromised.

When illness or injury occurs we suddenly appreciate our good health and hold in highest esteem those who dedicate their lives to restoring people to health.

“What will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?” (Matt 16:26)

“What will it profit me to be physically healthy but spiritually sick?” Infinitely more important than your physical health is your soul health, your spiritual health.

You're sick! You know it's true!

The Divine Physician has given you the diagnosis:

“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

As you reflect on the past year, look inside yourself and discover that the cause of your greatest sadness, the cause of your greatest suffering, your greatest obstacle to personal well-being, is YOU. That is, your sinfulness.

“But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” (1 Corinthians 15:57)

The same God Who has diagnosed you with a terminal condition is the same God Who waits for you in the confessional with the medicine of mercy.

How long has it been since you went to Confession? What kind of “sin-sickness” do you need to bring to the Good Doctor? Don't be the type of person who “doesn't like to go to the doctor.”

Go and be healed!



“Lord, you can heal me.”

Matt 8:2

“Heroes Work Here”

You’ve seen the sign in front of hospitals: “HEROES WORK HERE.”

You’ve seen the sign in front of nursing homes and police stations: “HEROES WORK HERE.”

Doctors, nurses, police officers, and public servants of all kinds, who risked their own lives to care for the lives of others: yes, these are heroes. Every time we saw those signs we felt proud of them and inspired by their courage and love.

The word “hero” comes from a Greek word “hērōs” which means “demi-God.” In other words, “god-like.”

St. Peter writes that we have all been created to be god-like, to “*share in the divine nature.*” (2 Peter 1:4) God’s grace is powerful and transformative, and when Christ lives in us He will do heroic things in us.

The examples of famous saints, i.e., canonized saints, show the many ways that a person can live what the Church terms a “life of heroic virtue.”

You are called to live a life of heroic virtue; you are called

to live a heroic life! You are called to be an ordinary non-famous saint! You can do this!

St. Peter’s words were not addressed to a select, elite few, but rather to all disciples of Jesus Christ. That includes you! The “universal call to holiness” declares that God’s grace equips you to live a heroic virtue kind of life.

So continue to honor and express gratitude and admiration for the heroes of this past year. But even more say ‘yes’ to God’s amazing grace in your own life. Believe - because it’s true - that you are capable of living heroically in your own unique way!



“... that you may share in the divine nature.”

2 Peter 1:4

In good times and in bad...

Sadly the rate of divorce has increased during the past year. During the past year couples spent more and more time together at home, and they didn't like it.

The long-standing tensions and resentments that had burdened them for years could no longer be ignored. Hobbies, long hours at work, two people living an overly busy lifestyle: these things were temporarily taken away and thus forced the man and woman to see each other face to face.

"I take you, to be my spouse, in good times and in bad..."

These vows are not easy to profess, because the "bad" times will not only be sickness, financial difficulties, and other problems that are beyond our control.

In fact, the most serious and painful "bad" times in marriage are caused by one's spouse himself/herself.

My spouse disappoints me; my spouse doesn't listen to me; my spouse is selfish; my spouse judges me; my spouse has failed me. These are the truly "bad" times in a marriage, and they inevitably come. Because all marriages have this in common: a sinner marries a fellow sinner.

The marriage relationship is like the engine of a car. Everyone knows that an engine requires regular maintenance. And everyone knows that if the engine doesn't sound right, or if it is not functioning properly, then you unashamedly take your car to a mechanic!

If your marriage is suffering - if it isn't "working" - then take your marriage to a mechanic! A counselor or a compassionate priest is waiting for you. Like a car engine, a marriage can indeed be repaired and good times can return!



"Forgive each other...the Lord has forgiven you..."

Colossians 3:13

JAZZ

Jesus

Always

Zig

Zags

*“Jazz music is the power of now...given to you by musicians
as they make split-second decisions.”*

(Wynton Marsalis, jazz trumpeter and author)

Jazz is a musical art-form which was conceived and born here in the United States in the last century. In its classical small group form, it consists largely of the art of improvisation.

A quartet (piano, bass, drums, and a solo instrument such as a saxophone or trumpet) begins by playing a given melody and chord progression together. Then the improvisation begins!

Each musician takes that given musical situation and then improvises his own rendition, with his own spontaneously composed melodies. Each takes his turn doing this and then they conclude by playing the original melody together.

Improvisation comes from the Latin word “*improvisus*,” which means “unforeseen.”

Much of this last year was unforeseen! It created situations which required us to improvise and create solutions to new and difficult problems. Creativity and adaptability became indispensable skills.

Jesus, the God-Man, ‘zig-zags.’ In his public ministry he defied all sorts of norms and expectations, and he taught and did many “unforeseen” things. And certainly in our lives today he continues to surprise us.

We are called to be creative and trust the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit Who was at work in you this past year will continue to be at work in you. As a new year begins and new situations emerge, call upon the Holy Spirit and know that you will be able to follow Jesus wherever He zig-zags and leads you!



A Global Moral Pandemic

For a host of reasons many good men (and women) fall into the habit of looking at images of the human body and images of physical intimacy on the internet.

Every person is created to love and to be loved, and for that reason the desire to experience love in the form of sexual intimacy is a strong healthy God-given desire. God created this desire. God created the gift of physical intimacy.

Immoral action is always a matter of twisting something good into something bad.

In most cases, what a person needs to do is PREFER. Prefer peace, because this sin does not bring peace. Prefer real human contact, because this simulation does not truly satisfy.

There is an acronym which can help us to PREFER.

It focuses you on what makes you strong:

Prayer: you need prayer like you need air

Rest: your will is weak when you are tired

Exercise: your body and soul are connected!

Friendship: isolation makes you weak!

Eucharist: the greatest source of divine grace!

Reconciliation: “you are forgiven” - start over!

Many times the struggle to be pure is not primarily about purity itself. Rather the struggle with impurity is a consequence of not keeping ourselves strong by relying on the six elements of PREFER.

Rely on them and keep up the fight!

(If you are losing the fight and feel that the sin has now become an addiction, do not be ashamed. God is not ashamed of you. Give yourself the chance you deserve and get professional assistance. I highly recommend this website: <https://freedom-coaching.net> which sets you up with a “coach” so that you can win the battle!)



Freedom

American culture passionately celebrates and defends freedom. When asked to wear masks, or maintain physical distance, or accept other new regulations, many Americans balked.

“This is a free country!”

Prescinding completely from the particular issues involved, the topic of freedom is fundamental to living life to the full.

*“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”
(John 10:10)*

A person who is not free is not able to live life “to the full.” The question is: what does it mean to be truly free? Father Jacques Philippe explains true freedom brilliantly in his very popular book, entitled “Interior Freedom.”

“We blame our surroundings, while the real problem is elsewhere.... True freedom...resides in the possibility of believing, hoping, and loving in all circumstances, thanks to the assistance of the Holy Spirit.... Growth in faith, hope, and love is the only pathway to freedom.”²

² P.22; p. 24-25

Do you believe this? Is this your experience? Do you live according to this interior freedom?

If you do not possess this kind of freedom, then “Interior Freedom” is the next book that you must read. Millions of people have read this book and it has led them to begin living life to the full!



“For freedom Christ has set us free.”

Galatians 5:1

The Bride is Wounded

As a bride walks down the aisle on her wedding day she looks exquisitely beautiful! Her hair is perfect; her dress is perfect; her eyes are shining; she glows!

Christ's bride glows, too! When the Church celebrates the canonization of a new saint in St. Peter's Square in Rome. When a new priest is ordained. When a holy woman makes promises of poverty, chastity, and obedience as a consecrated religious sister. When a new church is consecrated by her bishop, a successor to the Apostles. The Bride of Christ is beautiful!

But tragically there is also the reality of darkness and sin in the life of the Church. Then what we see is a bride walking down the aisle with visible wounds, visible bruises, and visible cuts. This same Bride of Christ is composed of sinners, from top to bottom.

The past year continued to reveal this reality, in countless news stories, and then most dramatically in the McCarrick Report. What is a faithful Catholic to think in response to all of this?

Fr. Thomas Weinandy, OFM Cap., writes: *"I have often*

*asked myself: 'Why has Jesus let all of this happen?' The only answer that comes to mind is that Jesus wants to manifest just how weak is the faith of many within the Church, even among too many of her bishops.... In recognizing this darkness, the Church will humbly need to renew herself, and so continue to grow in holiness."*³

The Church is a Wounded Bride. What gives us strength is knowing that the Groom will never fall out of love with His Bride. *"If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself."* (2 Tim 2:13)



*"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and handed himself over for her."
Ephesians 5:25*

³ Letter to Pope Francis (July 31, 2017)

“We are all a little fragile...”

In his General Audience on March 4, 2015, Pope Francis said: “We are all a little fragile, the elderly.

Some, however, are particularly weak, many are alone, and affected by illness. Some depend on the indispensable care and attention of others. Will we take a step back for this? Will we abandon them to their fate? Where there is no honor to the elderly, there is no future for the young.”

The Holy Father, himself an elderly person, speaks from the heart. His commitment to proclaiming the mercy of God to an unmerciful world takes on a special meaning in light of the pandemic which has principally impacted the elderly.

Do we love them? Do we show them mercy? Do we see Christ in them? Do we see our future selves in them? All of us can make an examination of conscience regarding our relationship with the elderly:

How do I speak to elderly people? Do I show them due respect and honor?

How do I care for my elderly parents? For my elderly relatives? How much do I pray for the elderly?

Six years before he died, Pope St. John Paul II wrote this simple prayer at the end of his “Letter to the Elderly”:

“Grant, O Lord of life, that we may savor every season of our lives as a gift filled with promise for the future. Grant that we may lovingly accept your will, and place ourselves each day in your merciful hands. And when the moment of our definitive “passage” comes, grant that we may face it with serenity, without regret for what we shall leave behind. Mary, Mother of pilgrim humanity, pray for us ‘now and at the hour of our death.’ Keep us ever close to Jesus, your beloved Son and our brother, the Lord of life and glory.
Amen.”



Hunger for the Living God

The great St. Augustine writes: “I know the price of my redemption: I eat it, and I drink it, and I distribute it to others; and I, who am poor, desire to be filled by it in the company of those who eat and are filled.”

The pandemic created a spiritual famine, a Eucharistic famine!

Never in the history of the Church has the People of God been substantially denied the ability to receive the Lord Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist for so long a time. It was an unprecedented event that caused countless souls to go spiritually sacramentally un-fed.

In the Gospel of Matthew our Lord places feeding the hungry as the first of the works of charity, and thus what an awful irony that for an extended period He was unable to feed his own flock.

Do you appreciate the gift of the Blessed Eucharist now more than ever before? Do you take advantage of the rich opportunity to adore the Eucharistic Lord in an adoration chapel or in a Holy Hour?

Do you give thanks to God for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass which unites you horizontally to every believer and vertically unites your life to Jesus Crucified and Risen?

*O Sacrament Most Holy,
O Sacrament Divine,
All praise and all thanksgiving
Be every moment thine!*

*May the Heart of Jesus,
in the Most Blessed Sacrament,
be praised, adored, and loved,
With grateful affection, at every moment,
in all the tabernacles of the world,
even till the end of time. Amen.*



I Missed Standing in Line

Many can say this today: “During the lockdown I missed being able to stand in line for Confession.” Who would have thought that we would ever miss being able to stand in line for anything?

Of all the things that we missed it was both Holy Communion and Confession. The one Sacrament intimately linked to the other.

Waiting in line for Confession, one typically avoids making eye contact with fellow sinners who are in line ahead and behind. Each one concentrates on the sins that have brought him/her to the church to wait in line that day.

You want to be truthful with God’s representative, the priest, because a lack of honesty will undermine God’s will to administer pardon and peace to you. “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned...”

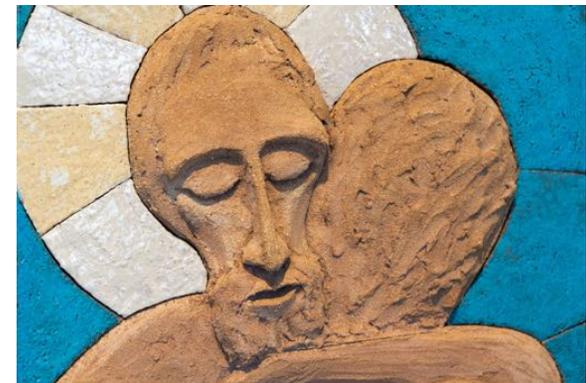
The ritual event actually takes place rather quickly; just a few minutes or so and you are definitively declared forgiven by the Church’s representative! Having opened your heart to God with sincere repentance you walk out of the confessional free and hopeful. “I will do my best! God, help

me now to do my best!”

Sin leads to guilt leads to shame leads to discouragement leads (potentially) to despair. Confession breaks the chain and restores you to health and hope!

Now that Confession is back, the lines are formed again, and hope is back! So be grateful and keep ever in your memory those days when a certain waiting-in-line was forbidden you.

*“In failing to confess, Lord,
I would only hide You from myself,
not myself from You.”
(St. Augustine)*



The “Sacrament” of the Present Moment

In the 1700’s there was a French Jesuit priest who was very talented and given much administrative responsibility.

Fortunately he was also given responsibility to provide spiritual direction for a community of nuns. The nuns collected his letters and talks and these have come down to us today as a little book of profound spirituality entitled, “Abandonment to Divine Providence,” by Father Jean-Pierre de Caussade.

Father de Caussade coined the phrase “the sacrament of the present moment.” Our Catholic Faith gives us seven Sacraments, seven intimate mysteries instituted by Christ himself to give us grace.

To call the present moment a “sacrament” is to say that an experience of God can only happen in the present moment. To attempt to live in the past or in the future disconnects us from God for Whom all things are eternally present.

Father de Caussade writes: “There is not a moment in which God does not present Himself under the cover of some pain to be endured, of some consolation to be enjoyed, or of some duty to be performed. All that takes place within us, around us, or through us, contains and conceals His divine action.

We must offer ourselves to God like a clean, smooth canvas and not worry ourselves about what God may choose to paint on it, but at each moment, feel only the stroke of His brush.”

These poetic words are not easy to live, but they do describe the only way to truly live!

Over the past year there has been so much strenuous effort to predict the future, to protect ourselves in the future, to feel in control of our future.

And all the while God continues to say, “*I AM WHO AM.*” (Exodus 3:14)



Death on Every Doorstep

Everyone has an awareness that death is the inevitable last event of a person's life on earth. Everyone knows that we are all "just passing through."

But never before has the whole world been brought face to face with this reality in a communal way. Never before has the human family suffered a global pandemic that simultaneously afflicted every continent that man inhabits. Death was seemingly on everyone's doorstep, from the pauper to the Prime Minister.

Death puts everything in perspective. As one wise man said: "The main thing is to keep the last thing the first thing." Your death is the "last thing" and that orients you to correctly prioritize matters in your life.

The things in life that will ultimately prepare you for a "happy death," or a "holy death" are worthwhile. Anything that is not on that list becomes dispensable.

What changes have occurred in your thinking during the past year? What have you come to value more than before? Are you ready to die a holy death if such were to happen to you tomorrow? If not, why not? What attachments stand

in the way of your embrace of a life that "*eye has not seen*"? (1 Cor 2:9)

St. John Henry Newman composed a beautiful prayer for a happy death. May we all "die as we desire to live..."

O my Lord and Savior, support me in my last hour by the strong arms of Thy sacraments and the fragrance of thy consolations. Let Thy absolving words be said over me, and the holy oil sign and seal me; and let Thine own body be my food and Thy blood my sprinkling; and let Thy Mother Mary come to me, and my angel whisper peace to me, and Thy glorious saints and my own dear patrons smile on me, that in and through them all I may die as I desire to live, in Thy Church, in Thy faith, and in Thy love. Amen.



PerfectionISM

The past year forced us to accept very imperfect situations. Our work life and our home life and our whole life was turned upside-down and twisted into configurations that were uncomfortable and far from ideal.

Reasonable people experienced frustration and stress. Who wouldn't? But did you find yourself losing control of your frustration? Did you find yourself stressed to a breaking point?

This can happen for many reasons, but one reason can be the spirit of perfectionISM. Striving for perfection is always good (and Jesus commands it in Matt 5:48) but the "ISM" is the problem. Clinging to or needing perfection is the problem.

The solution is to look to God Himself. Father Jacques Philippe explains: *"God doesn't love 'ideal persons'.... He loves actual, real people. What often blocks the action of God's grace in our lives is less our sins or failings, than it is our failure to accept our own weakness..."*

"The right attitude toward God, then, is having a very peaceful, very 'relaxed' acceptance of ourselves and our

*weaknesses as well as an immense desire for holiness, and a strong determination to progress, based on the limitless trust in God's grace. This **double attitude**" is the KEY! ⁴*

As the saying goes, "God loves you just as you are; but He loves you too much to leave you where you are." This is the **double attitude** that allows us to strive for perfection, without falling into perfectionism!

Recommended reading: "The Way of Imperfection," by Father André Daigneault



⁴ Interior Freedom, pp. 32-33, 40

Full Version of the Serenity Prayer

“God grant me the grace to accept the things I cannot change...” This famous prayer (composed by Evangelical theologian Reinhold Niebuhr) is well-known in its abbreviated version. But did you know that the full version is more than twice as long?

Though it’s entitled the “Serenity Prayer,” one could rightly title the full version as “Prayer to Get Over My Control Issues!”

We all have control issues; we all want to be in control. Modern technology gives us control over so many details in our life and that only strengthens the erroneous idea in our heads that we are actually in control of our lives.



In fact, we are not, and this past year made that abundantly clear. So when that crazy idea gets in your head that you are in control, pray the full version of the Serenity Prayer. You - and everyone around you - will be the better for it!

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships
as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;

Trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
forever in the next.

Amen.

Get a (Prayer) Life!

In the 1980s the phrase, “get a life!” was commonly spoken in television shows and pop culture. It was a mildly critical phrase intending to say that a person could do something better with his/her life.

Well we all want to do better! We want to do better in our work life, our family life, our friendship life, our exercise life, and most of all in our PRAYER life.

How is your PRAYER LIFE? Do you have a prayer life?

To answer, one needs to first understand that there are three levels of prayer.

(1) Vocal prayer is the reciting and reading of prayers. This is the most basic kind of prayer life. If you say a prayer or two in the morning and at night, then you are a “vocal pray-er.”

(2) Meditative prayer is quiet prayer that utilizes some kind of aid to prayer. That could be using Scripture or some other spiritual reading to facilitate reflection and meditation. This is ideally done in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. If you visit a church or chapel (or some quiet place) regularly

to do this, then you are a “meditative pray-er.”

(3) Contemplative prayer is the highest level of prayer. It is not something that a person can choose to do. Rather it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It begins to happen after a person has established a habit of doing meditative prayer.

Commit this year to improving your prayer life, since it is the fire at the core of your being. The more your prayer life improves, the more all the other areas of your life will improve and Christ will radiate from within you!

Recommended reading: “Prayer Primer: Igniting a Fire Within,” by Fr. Thomas Dubay.



It's a Catholic Thing!

For many centuries the Church practiced some caution with regard to the reading and interpretation of Sacred Scripture. St. Peter himself offered the admonition: “[*In Paul's letters*] *there are some things hard to understand that the ignorant and unstable distort to their own destruction, just as they do the other scriptures.*” (2 Peter 3:16)

However, in modern times the Church vigorously encourages lay Catholics to read Sacred Scripture! It is not necessary to study theology or take a formal Scripture class in order to read and pray with the Word of God.

Consider this clear instruction in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “The Church forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. ‘Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.’ (St. Jerome)”⁵

If you attend Mass and know the basics of the Catholic Faith, then you are sufficiently equipped to read the Word of God and pray with it. You will read and interpret the Word of God on the solid foundation of your Catholic beliefs.

It is most practical to do this by reading a short passage from one of the Gospels. Passages about the life of Christ are the easiest to understand and to apply to one's own particular life (especially with the aid of footnotes that explain particular words or historical details.)

You can do this on your own; you can pair up with another person and do it together; you can join a parish group that does it. Whichever format you prefer, just do it! Being conversant with the Bible is not a “Protestant thing” - it's a Catholic thing!



“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path.”

Psalm 119:105

⁵ Paragraph 133

Holy Cards are Dangerous! (We DO Need Friendship!)

Holy cards with images of saints on them are very dangerous! When you look at a holy card you see the image of just one person: Saint Ignatius of Loyola; or Saint Therese of Lisieux.

Beware of these holy cards! They can easily deceive you into thinking that these holy people had no friends!! It is particularly easy for us as Americans (with our high esteem for rugged individualism) to imagine that the saint became a saint by mere individualistic will-power. It's not true!

Saints are people like you and me and we need friendship!
Allow the saints themselves to convince you.

St. Maximilian Kolbe: "God sends us friends as our firm support."

St. Francis de Sales: "Form friendships only with those who can share virtuous things with you."

St. Thomas Aquinas: "There is nothing more to be prized on this earth than true friendship. Friendship brings out the best part of a person, through forgetfulness of self."

St. Teresa of Avila: "True friends correct each other when it is necessary."

The hectic pace of modern life militates against the development of intimate friendship. Review your lifestyle and examine the priority that you give to friendship in your life.

Intimate friendship (which develops slowly over years) bears much fruit, not the least of which is the ability to enter into divine friendship with Jesus.

"I no longer call you slaves, but friends..."

(John 15:15)



Mary, Mother Most Affectionate

Jesus possesses both a human nature and a divine nature. By possessing a human nature he claims human needs: for food, for drink, for rest, for love, for friendship, for sleep, for affection.

There is no one who met his need for human affection more than his mother, Mary. Perhaps we should even give her a new title: *Mother Most Affectionate!*

She tenderly loved him in his infancy and childhood. She spoke lovingly to him and caressed his skin. In his adulthood she continued to be a source of affectionate support for him.

So much so that he needed her at the foot of the Cross, so that he would not die alone without beholding her loving gaze.

Physical images of Mary allow us to be affectionate with her. Rosary beads in our hands unconsciously link the sense of touch to this woman who touches each one of us tenderly and mystically with her love.

Affectionate love is something that all of us are made to

give and to receive. To give and to receive affection as family members, as friends, as spouses, as parents, as grandparents, as relatives.

We are not Stoics; we are Christians!

Pray to Mary for healing in the area of affection. All of us have experienced some kind of rejection which can cause us to withhold affection from others or be afraid to receive affection from others.

Our Blessed Mother affectionately loves you! One of the joys of Heaven will surely be the physical embrace of Mary, our Mother! Embrace her already now in your life of faith and prayer.



“Mary is more mother than queen.”

(St. Therese of Lisieux)

The Most Important Person in Your Life

Jesus is the Most Important Person in your life! He is numerically One Person, but by way of His Divinity His Infinite Love for you takes many forms, like different facets of a single diamond. Which facets of the Son-of-God-Diamond shine brightest to you?

Jesus the Teacher

Jesus the Healer

Jesus the Crucified

Jesus the Victor

Jesus the Friend

Jesus the Word

Jesus the Word Made Flesh

Jesus the Miracle-Worker

Jesus the Prophet

Jesus the Forgiver

Jesus the Savior

Jesus the Jewish Messiah

Jesus the Bread of Life

Jesus the Lover

Jesus the Son of God the Father

Jesus the Son of Mary

Jesus the Head of the Church

Jesus the Poor Man

Jesus the King

Jesus the Judge

Jesus the Warrior

Jesus the Shepherd

Jesus the Redeemer

Jesus the Way

Jesus the Truth

Jesus the Life

Jesus the New Adam

Jesus the New Moses

Jesus the Bridegroom of the Church

Jesus is truly *“all things to all men”!* (1 Cor 9:22) In fact, He has to be! As Universal Savior the Lord Jesus must be a Person Who is all-encompassing and infinitely dynamic as He came to personally save each and every person, regardless of his/her social class, culture, personality, or life experience.

In other words, Jesus is a “catholic” Savior! “Catholic,” from the Greek, means “universal,” “for all.” His infinite dynamism makes him a truly Universal Savior.

This coming year you want your relationship with the Lord Jesus to grow by taking time in prayer to get to know Him better. You do know Him. But you are made to get to

know Him better and better over time. His Infinitude means that this experience will never end and your relationship can get deeper and deeper.

There are so many things to look forward to in this New Year 2021! New Year's Day is the world's universal feast day of hope and expectation. But for those who know and love the Lord Jesus, a new year is seen for what it truly is - a New Year of Grace to grow in your knowledge and love of your Savior.

Let it begin! Happy New Year 2021!

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Cor 13:13)

