

Have you ever experienced reading something?

The Gospels

A book or instruction manual

Something in a movie

When you read it or see it later

Even after many, many times

Something new jumps out at you

What has changed?

The books were not re-edited

The movie is the same today as it was when it came out

No, we change

And going through certain experiences opens new horizons

We gain new perspective on things

This is something only humans can do

Angels have perfect knowledge

Animals do not have the ability to change in this way

They simply rely on instinct

We can reflect on things as we see Mary doing in our Gospel

She kept all these things in her heart

By doing this we grow

We change

We see things in a new light

This is what the New Year offers us

The chance to look into our past

To see what can be

And make resolutions right here, right now

The past, future and present all wrapped up in the moment

When we do this

Even though we have similar readings on this feast day

Even though some points in my homily may be similar to last year

They are not the same

Because we are not the same

To do this, we have to start off looking to the past

Am I better off today than I was last New Year's Day?

Is my job better

My studies?

My relationships with my spouse?

My kids

My co-workers or classmates

How about spiritually

How is my relationship with God?

Has this grown?

How is my prayer life?

My attendance at Sunday Mass

**Am I here because I desire to worship my God?
Or am I here to fulfill an obligation?**

**In my professional life
In my family life or in my spiritual life**

There are only 3 directions we can be moving

Life comes at us

Like swimming in a river

We can strive to swim into the current

To make headway

It takes effort

It takes courage

It takes a plan of attack

Sometimes it takes a life jacket

And that's OK. As long as we don't quit

Because it is easier to turn around

Go with the flow

Let life take us where it might

Let it push us around

The 3rd option is to go sideways

To seek out an eddy or backwater slough

Where the current can't reach us

But that is where the water gets stagnant

Where we run into dead ends

The New Year gives us a chance to see where we are

Am I striving forward?

Have I given up?

Do I simply look for a path of least resistance?

Honestly, only about 10% of us are in the first group

Probably around the same amount are in the 2nd group

The vast majority of us are in the 3rd group

We know what we should do

To become the best spouse we can be

The best priest I can be

The best son or daughter we can be

The best employer or employee

The best student, doctor, teacher, friend

The best Catholic Christian I can be

But we often lack a plan

We simply float where we are rather than going where we

desire

As we prepare New Year's resolutions

We need to look at our past

John Paul II had a way to do this

He called it *purification of the memory*

It means we purify our memory of any self-delusions

It calls for honesty with ourselves, at the deepest level

It is an honest look at the lies I might have told about others

It is about the lies I believe about myself

It is about naming our sins

And not being afraid of them

Because when we name them, they lose their grip on us

We take advantage of confession if we need to

Then we let the past be the past

We don't live there

We look to the future

Where is it I want to be?

Spiritually and physically

We let our past shed light on our future

Following Mary's example of praying over these things

Reflecting on them in our heart

Then making resolutions that are challenging

But attainable

Perhaps getting to Sunday Mass is a challenge

Or keeping the Holy Days of Obligation

What is my plan to become the Catholic I am called to be?

Concretely, what am I going to do?

Write it down

Share it with another for accountability

Identify spiritual aspects and material aspects

Perhaps it starts with prayer

Giving God 5, 10, 15 minutes each day

Then I re-prioritize my Saturday or Sunday

So Mass is a priority, not an after-thought

Other things that come up are then built around the Mass

Not the other way around

Jesus tells us in Luke:

‘For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also’

He is telling us that we are both matter and spirit

And they are inter-related

To degrees we are not even aware of

We can begin with either, the material or the spiritual

But our plan, our resolutions have to include both aspects

Wherever the Spirit directs our hearts

Wherever we see an area to improve upon

Relationships with family

With those at work

Our relationship with God

The Father, Son or Holy Spirit

Do I need healing in any area of my life?

My involvement in other aspects of the church

My involvement in the community

Wherever we are in our life's journey

Who we are, what we are

We are called to be the best we can be

Not for ourselves

But for others

To give back to God

The best of what he has given each of us

Through giving of ourselves

This is the best gift we can offer to God in this New Year

It is the best gift we can give to our neighbor

And we offer this gift in the present moment

Through our actions and the words we speak

Through our example and our involvement in the life of others

So in this New Year, we can join with our Blessed Mother

Reflect on all these things in our heart

Purify our memory

Deepen our relationship with God

Be the best you can be today

And each day God gives you

A happy and blessed New Year to you