



Catholic Church and School

"Time keeps on slippin', slippin', slippin' into the future." So go the lyrics to a song (Steve Miller Band, "Fly Like an Eagle") but what is time? "Does anybody really know what time it is? Does anybody really care?" go the lyrics to another song (Chicago, "Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is"). Be the first person to give me the song titles and artists after Mass in order to receive a special New Year's blessing.

Time is a measurement of change. We measure time by the change of position of hands or numbers on the face of a clock or watch. These in turn are based on changes in the natural world around us, such as the rotation of the earth and the revolution of earth around the sun. These natural changes were chosen because they occur with some regularity that can be measured and predicted like the sun rising in the morning. So time is a measurement of change. We are reminded of time and change this weekend as the year and calendars around us change. We're all changing. If you and I stop changing we are in trouble because the only time we stop changing in this world is when we're dead.

While you and I and the universe around us are all changing, God does not change. God is perfect. Think about what it means to "change". "Change" means one of two things, either a move toward something better or a move toward something worse. Change can either be for better or for worse.

We certainly cannot say that God changes or "moves" toward something worse because that would not be compatible with God's nature of total perfection. Something that is already perfect does not move toward imperfection. We also cannot say that God changes or "moves" toward something better because perfection means a state that is already complete. Something that is already perfect has no need to change.

Now think about prayer. Does prayer change God or does prayer change us? Since God does not change it follows that prayer changes us. So it was with Mary. It says in the Gospel that Mary "kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart". That means that she was praying about them, she was counting her blessings. The message given to her by the shepherds, that her Son is "Messiah and Lord", changed her life. It changed her and prepared her to accept all of the sacrifice and suffering her Son would endure in His life and death. Prayer does not change God, it changes us. We are changed by prayer. We need to change. You and I need to change.

A battleship was in heavy, foggy weather for several days and the captain ordered a 24-hour lookout. Late one evening, the captain was alerted. The lookout had spotted a light approaching head on. The captain ordered a signal to be sent by flashing lights: "Advise you to change course 20 degrees." The response flashed back: "Advise you to change 20 degrees." The captain signaled back, "I am a captain. Change your course 20 degrees." The response came back, "I am a sailor, second class. Change your course 20 degrees." The captain was furious with the lowly sailor's response and signaled, "I am a battleship. Change course now!" The response came back, "I am a

lighthouse." We're like that captain, wanting others to change, wanting God to change. But God is like that lighthouse. God doesn't move. God doesn't change.

New Year's reminds us that we are changing and being changed by world around us. The question for us is this: are we changing for better or for worse? Are we moving closer to Jesus or away from Jesus? The goal for our New Year's resolutions should be to change, to move, toward something better and at least one of those New Year's resolutions should be a spiritual resolution, to do something to move closer to Jesus.

A resolution needs two parts. A resolution is like taking a trip. You need a destination and a map to get there. The Gospel says that the shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem. They had a resolution. They wanted to move close to Jesus in Bethlehem, their destination, so they walked the paths leading to Bethlehem, their map to get there.

Sometimes our resolutions stop with the first part. We make a resolution to do something but fail to specify how we get there. We make resolutions to get in shape, to lose weight, to get better grades in school or to make peace with others, but we fail to map out the way to get there. A resolution always has two parts: "This where I want to go and this how I will get there."

It was not good enough for the shepherds to say, "We want to see Jesus." Instead they said, "We want to see Jesus by walking 'in haste to Bethlehem'."

It is not good enough to say, "I want to lose weight and get in shape." Instead say, "I want to lose weight and get in shape by riding my exercise bike three times per week." It is not good enough to say, "I want to get better grades in school." Instead say, "I want to get better grades by spending an extra hour studying three days per week."

Be as specific as possible. It is not good enough to say, "I want more peace in my family this year." Instead say, "I want more peace in my family by spending more time at the dinner table instead of rushing off to the TV, newspaper or video games."

It is not good enough to say, "I want to be holier." Instead say, "I want to be holier by spending at least three minutes in prayer every day."

I suggest a spiritual New Year's Resolution for this year. Three minutes of prayer at the end of each day:

1. During the first minute, think about the high point of the day, something good that happened like a kindness or a friendship. Count your blessings and thank God the Father.
2. During the second minute, think about the low point of the day, something bad that happened, like an impatient or unkind word and ask Jesus for His forgiveness.
3. During the third minute, look ahead to the next day, something that needs to be done or a problem that needs to be resolved and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance.

This is a way of praying with the Trinity about the past, present and future. Prayer is the best change we can make in our lives this year and every year. Prayer changes us and moves us closer to our unchanging God.

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