

# Seasons of the Spirit

## Chapter Five

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### *Leaving the Past and Entering the New Year*

#### **GATHER AND PRAY**

Our lives are made of days and nights, of seasons and years, for we are part of a universe of suns and moons and planets. We mark ends and we make beginnings and, in all, we praise God for the grace and mercy that fill our days. Amen.

from *CATHOLIC HOUSEHOLD BLESSINGS AND PRAYERS*

#### **Reconnect**

#### **Report on Actions**

#### **Reflection**

"... No one patches an old cloak with a piece of unshrunk cloth, for its fullness pulls away from the cloak and the tear gets worse. People do not put new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. Rather, they pour new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

Matthew 9:16-17

"...He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away."

The one who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."

Then he said, "Write these words down, for they are trustworthy and true."

Revelation 21:4-5

- What did God make new for you this past year? Was it a difficult or pleasant experience?

## **SOCIAL INQUIRY**

The Romans seem to have an idea that New Year's Eve is the appropriate time to rid themselves of the old and take on the new, not symbolically but practically, by throwing out of the window any old thing, such as a dress, a suit, cracked dishes, a dilapidated chair.

The idea is a sound one not only for New Year's Eve but also every day, and the throwaway of the old might properly go far beyond unwanted objects to the disposal of all old, tired, gloomy thoughts. Every night before retiring, the ritual of mental thought emptying 'ill get the mind in good working order for the succeeding day. So every night deliberately drop those old, tired, gloomy thoughts and come alive.

*The Positive Principal Today*  
by Norman Vincent Peale  
Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976

We stand on the threshold of a brand new year. We cannot see one step ahead. We know nothing of what lies before us. It is to us a new, a strange, an unknown path. Will we see another year? Will Jesus come this year? Will death strike our home? Will war break out again?

From the signs round about us we may ominously expect many unwelcome surprises, for we have not passed this way before. We enter upon a path unknown. We would be filled with fear were it not for the promises of God. What a glorious privilege to be assured that God knows every step of the way and has made provision for us. How wonderful, as we stand at the beginning of this period of time to know that we have a Captain and a Guide who knows the way and has planned it all ahead for us. And so we rest upon His promises.

*From Our Daily Bread*  
by M. R. De Haan and H. G. Bosch

The beginning of a new year is an opportunity for improvement. It makes little difference what the past has been, for we are not to look back to see if the furrow be crooked. What matters most is the sanctification of the now moment. Time is so precious that God doles it out second by second. If life in the past has been evil, the new year is a time for penance. In such a way is time redeemed. If life, however, has been virtuous, the new year is an opportunity for greater self-perfection.

*On Being Human - Reflections on Life and Living*  
by Fulton J. Sheen  
Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1982

## **Observe**

1. Ask a co-worker or friend why they make New Year's resolutions and how long do they keep them.
2. Recall a New Year's Eve that was special or memorable to your family. Why?
3. How has your celebration and experience of New Year's changed as your life has changed?

### **Judge**

1. By taking the "opportunity for improvement", how has your life changed as a result of a New Year's resolution?
2. How can we experience a "new year" more often in our lives than once a year?
3. How can New Year's be a time of reflection as well as a celebration?
4. Why do we tend to hold on to past failures instead of letting go?

### **Act**

1. Spend New Year's Day (or a day close to it) clearing your house of broken or unused items.
2. Start a new prayer practice. Before bed examine your life: What was good or bad today? Give thanks and turn over your regrets and failures to God.
3. Make and keep a New Year's resolution; mark your calendar to self-check.
4. At a family meeting, have each member share what they are most grateful for the past year and their hopes for the next year.

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Have each person write down their regrets and/or failures from the past year. Without sharing them, place the pieces of paper in an ashtray or fireplace and burn them as you read this prayer as a group out loud:*

Remember us, O God; from age to age be our comforter. You have given us the wonder of time, blessings in days and nights, seasons and years. Bless your children at the turning of the year, and fill the months ahead with the bright hope that is ours in the coming of Christ. You are our God, living and reigning, for ever and ever.

Amen.

from *CATHOLIC HOUSEHOLD BLESSINGS AND PRAYERS*

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