



From A Bishop's Journal (677)

Peace and Joy throughout 2007!

Every year's end we are invited to evaluate what we have experienced through the days, weeks and months which were real "gifts of God" to us. We are also invited to offer Him the coming year in all trust, along with its joys and uncertainties.

Ad Limina Visit, and 2006 Congress

Among the events that have marked me and my brother bishops during 2006, there is the unforgettable visit to the Holy Father and to his close collaborators. I shall long remember Benedict XVI's encouraging words to us:

"In your plan of spiritual renewal you are confronted with the delicate task of the restructuring of parishes and even of dioceses. This can never be done appropriately with simple social models of restructuring. Without Christ, we can do nothing. Prayer roots us in the truth, reminding us ceaselessly of the primacy of Christ and, in union with him, the primacy of the inner life and of holiness. Parishes are therefore justly considered first of all as houses and schools of communion. Therefore, parish restructuring is basically an exercise in spiritual renewal. This requires the pastoral promotion of holiness so that the faithful remain attentive to the will of God, in whose life we truly share as we become participants in His divine nature. Such holiness or such intimate communion through Christ and in the Holy Spirit, is strengthened by, among other things, a pedagogy of prayer, an introduction to the lives of the saints and to the many forms of spirituality which beautify and stimulate the life of the Church, through regular participation in the sacrament of reconciliation, and through a convincing catechesis on Sunday as 'the day of faith,' 'the day we cannot give up,' 'the day of hope'."

I pray that these words remain in my heart and my prayer throughout the new year when we shall continue to respond to the recommendations of last March's wonderful Pastoral Orientation Congress.

Pope John XXIII's Ten Commandments of Serenity

In the fall of 2006, in recollection of Vatican Council II which Pope John XXIII had convened, a document called "The Ten Commandments of Serenity of John XXIII" was published. As we near

the end of the year and are on the threshold of a new one, it is good to read these words of “Good Pope John:”

1. Today only I shall try to live the day exclusively without trying to solve the problem of my entire life.
2. Today only I shall pay close attention to being courteous: I shall criticise no one and shall not pretend to correct or discipline anyone but myself.
3. Today only I shall be happy in the certainty of having been created for happiness, not only in the other world but in the world today.
4. Today only I shall adapt to circumstances without pretending that they are bent to my desires.
5. Today only I shall take ten minutes for reading a good book, remembering that as food is good for the life of the body, good reading is necessary to the life of the soul.
6. Today only I shall do a good deed without telling anyone.
7. Today only I shall do one thing I really don't want to do, and if someone hurts me, I shall try not to let it show.
8. Today only I shall have a detailed schedule of my day. I may not go through it all, but I shall write it down, and I shall avoid two calamities: haste and indecision.
9. Today only I shall firmly believe – even if circumstances indicate otherwise – that God's Providence cares for me as if I were alone in the world.
10. Today only I shall not fear, and I shall especially not be afraid to appreciate what is beautiful and to believe in kindness. I am in a position to do good for twelve hours, which should not discourage me as if I had to do it throughout my life.

Peacemakers

In order to prayerfully bring the year 2006 to a close and open the year 2007, I would like to repeat this prayer inspired from Saint Francis of Assisi: “Where there is hatred, let me bring your love, where there is injury, your pardon, Lord, and where there is discord, let me bring peace. Where there is error, let me proclaim the truth, and where there is doubt, let me bring faith. Where there is despair, let me bring hope, where there is darkness, light, and where there is sadness, let me bring liberating joy.”

A New Year's Blessing

I pray the Lord to fill you with His choicest blessings, and I invite fathers and mothers to bless their children affectionately and in faith, at Christmas, on New Year's Day, and – why not? – every day of the year.

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