

## 'TIS THE NEW YEAR'

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During these wonderful winter days, all things seem to be in sync! From the winter solstice, nature's darkness has begun to lift. The celebration of the birth of Jesus marks the dawning of the Light of the World. January 1<sup>st</sup> lightens our hearts with a gift of time, the New Year 2018, an opportunity for a new beginning in our lives.

During the octave of Christmas, as a community of believers, our focus was on a family long ago who we recognize in faith as the Holy Family, Joseph, the carpenter, and Mary, who brought a son into the world who was to be its Savior. Jesus, the Son of God became human like us. Sent by God who so loves us, he is the one who shows us the path of life.

Where did you fit into that scene during this past Christmas season, twenty-one centuries later? Can you imagine your family called to show the world what a holy family looks like today? If you are tempted to laugh at the thought, stop and think for a minute. Today it is our call to

be Christ's presence and spread the kingdom of God in our times.

The times are chaotic. Change happens rapidly in all areas of life. Chaos generates confusion and darkness. Our world is torn apart by the evils of terrorism and war. Millions of refugees wander the face of the earth. In our country, fears abound and lead us into the temptation to close our doors to the stranger, to separate parents from their children by deportation and to turn away young dreamers who have grown up in our midst. We live in a secular society where materialism reigns and gospel values like truth, love, and fidelity to commitments are often compromised. Our churches experience diminishing attendance; religious faith is weakened, and gospel values wane. People are troubled by these times. Parents worry about the safety of their children, with the spread of bullying in our schools and drugs on our streets. What will the future hold for them?

Where can we turn for solutions to the problems that confront us? The answer may sound simplistic, but it is true. All transformation takes place in relationships - relationship to God, relationship to others, starting in our own homes. So, what is a family to do? For starters, the faithful love of parents for each other is a powerful catalyst in the lives of their children. Next, it is in receiving the love of their parents, that the next generation learns to love and share with others. Life is too short to be selfish. Slow down, take time to reflect, get to know the each other's hopes and dreams. Have the courage to talk about the things you care about as a family. In conversation, change begins, and the bonds that unite us are strengthened. Thus, love grows deep and strong enough to help us face the difficulties in life.

As this New Year begins, forget the flimsy resolutions of the past. Do you really believe that you can have a relationship with God whose compassionate love accompanies you day by day in times of darkness and in times of light? Give God a chance to change your heart and deepen your family relationships. As you learn to share deeply and listen closely to each other, you will become witnesses who let your light shine forth to family members and beyond to neighbors and friends, in parish, schools and work places. Someone has to start, why not you?

This New Year open a new chapter in the life of your life together. Celebrate the New Year with your kids. Show them you care. Ask them their deepest desire for themselves, and for the family during the coming year. Don't be afraid if there is silence at first. Listen attentively. You may be surprised by what you hear.