

Leading the FLOCK

BY BISHOP DANIEL E. THOMAS



“Behold, I make all things new”

We are only days into this new Year of Grace 2019, and already folks have told me that their well intentioned New Years’ resolutions have fallen by the wayside! Across time and cultures, people make resolutions at the start of the year. They want somehow to catch the spirit of newness a new calendar year brings. It’s not uncommon for people to resolve to lose weight, exercise more, smoke or drink less! But in the end, such resolutions touch only the physical or external appearances. Others resolve to learn a new language or read a book a month. But these seem to touch only on the intellectual. What about the spiritual?

“Out with the old and in with the new!” It’s a common phrase we hear at the new year. For many years living and working in Italy, I would marvel at the long-standing custom, in some quarters, of marking the new year by throwing items out of upstairs windows; things that were old, broken, no longer useful or too far gone to repair. They were thrown out as a symbolic gesture of letting go of the past and embracing the future. Of course, if you were walking the streets below those windows you might have to dodge a flying shoe, toaster or plate! But when you think about it, there’s something to that custom: to discard what is not essential, what’s beyond repair, what’s no longer useful, and to look to the new!

As we enter 2019, consider how the Lord wishes you to be made new. What is not essential, what’s broken, what’s no longer truly useful in your life? This year, along with those worthwhile physical or intellectual resolutions, I invite you to consider making spiritual resolutions, to realize how the Lord might wish to make you new in the spiritual or moral realm. He can make us new!

“Out with the old and in with the new!” In these first days of the new year, let’s focus on what needs to be made new in us, what needs to be brought back to life in us and what needs to be transformed in us.

This year, as every year, the Lord wants to show us that He has the power to make all things new. But just as with physical or intellectual resolutions, spiritual and moral resolutions require hard work, commitment and perseverance on our part. This year, with our cooperation, He can accomplish something new in us!

The Lord has the power to breathe new life into a tired spirit or listless prayer life. He has the power to reignite a faith that has grown lukewarm. He has the power to make right a broken relationship. He has the power to overcome that judgmental attitude, perennial lying or foul speech. He has the power to conquer that troubling sinful habit. He has the

power to revivify a beleaguered Church and her members and restore integrity and trust. He has the power, if only we resolve to cooperate with His grace!

When I was young, on New Year’s Eve, just after the stroke of midnight, our family went outside onto the porch to make noise, beating household pots and pans with spoons or clanging lids together! We were not alone (or crazy!) in doing this, as all the neighbors did the same. We were welcoming the new year and just having fun. But in fact, across cultures and for centuries, at the dawn of a new year, people have made loud noise to frighten away evil spirits with the hope of keeping them far from the year ahead! This new year, let’s work to cast away and ward against evil not by making loud noise, but by living virtuous lives.

“Out with the old and in with the new!” As we begin 2019, let’s together make the spiritual resolution to “throw out” of ourselves whatever is not of Christ, and to “take on and take in” the newness which is Christ himself!

“Behold, I make all things new” (Rev 21:5).

+ Daniel E. Thomas

Most Rev. Daniel E. Thomas
Bishop of Toledo
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