

FROM THE PASTOR

JANUARY 7, 2024

EPIPHANY SUNDAY

RESOLUTIONS

We have just begun this new year of grace, 2024. The year is merely a few days old. What will it hold for us? Humanly speaking we have many reasons to be uneasy and to have anxiety about the fate of our country and indeed the whole world. War, division, hatred...these are all the consequence of our unfaithfulness to God. But although so many may be far from God, God is never far from us. He wishes to draw us to Himself and follow in the footsteps of the saints.

The saints carry out God's will and His plan for their life perfectly. They do so because they are always living in the present moment. For God there is neither past nor future. He is always in the present. That is why He revealed to Moses that His name was I AM. Consequently, living in Him means living in the present moment. The past is gone, and we can do nothing about it. There is an old joke that illustrates this important truth. *A student driver was once told by the instructor never to look in the rear-view mirror. When asked why, the instructor told the student that if it is behind you, it does not matter.* Although this may not be good advice, it does illustrate in an amusing way that very sublime truth that we can do nothing about the past. Nor can we do anything about the future, because we do not possess it. Then the only thing we have in our hands is the present moment.

The Evil One will tempt us to lament and be ashamed of the past. He will tempt us to be anxious about the future. He will do everything he can to distract us from the present. The success of our lives depends not on our dreams, illusions and fantasies, but rather on the virtues we try to

acquire at the present moment and right where God has put us. There is an old saying, *Bloom where you are planted*.

The more we follow the example of the saints, and submit our emotions to our will, the closer to God will we be. And that closeness is the heart's fulfillment and desire. In the midst of this unstable, pleasure-seeking world which has strayed from God's path, let us make the resolution at the beginning of this year to live each day with Him so that we may be with Him in eternity.

THE JULIAN AND GREGORIAN CALENDAR

Many have heard the above expression and I thought this would be an opportune time for a little Church History. Much has been made in the news about the Ukrainians celebrating Christmas this year on December 25th. This broke with the former custom of celebrating Christmas on January 7th as do the Russians. However, the dispute is not whether Our Lord was born on December 25th or January 7th. The dispute is what day is December 25th. The Russians also believe Our Lord was born on December 25th. The only difference is that the Russians hold that January 7th is December 25th.

It was Julius Caesar who invented the calendar roughly 40 years before Our Lord's birth. That calendar is named in his honor. However, there was an incorrect estimation as to how many days it took for the completion of the year. The Julian Calendar underestimated it so that roughly 1 day each century was lost. There were no Leap Years in the Julian Calendar,

In October 1582, scientists working under the patronage of Pope Gregory XIII reformed the calendar. A Leap Day was added every four years, and the day the calendar went into effect (October 2, 1582) the date was advanced 13 days. Thus St. Teresa of Avila dies on October 2, 1582, the very day the calendar went into effect. However, it was already October 15th and her feast is kept on that day.

The new calendar, although a vast scientific improvement, was rejected by the non-Catholic nations of Europe. They would not follow *the pope's calendar*. England did not adopt it until the late eighteenth century. When they did so, there were riots in London as the people thought that 13 days were being taken out of their lives. The Orthodox Churches and nations also rejected it and adhered to the Julian Calendar. Finally, in 1923 the then USSR adopted the Gregorian Calendar. They still speak of Red October, the date of the Communist Revolution. However, it was November 1917 in the Gregorian calendar. Although the USSR and later Russia adapted the new calendar, the Orthodox Church did not. Thus, in the Orthodox Church of Russia (and its dependent Church in Ukraine) Christmas is/was kept on January 7th. All believe that Our Lord was born on December 25th. The only disagreement is what is the real December 25th?

and these, dear parishioners, are my thoughts of this week

In Jesus and Mary,

Monsignor James F. Pereda