

Impact

January 2024

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.



JANUARY IS A TIME FOR NEW BEGINNINGS

January is a time to begin anew. It is a time for reprioritizing and trying again. It is a time for surrender.

Wait, what??? You read correctly, it is a time for surrender.

God is constantly calling us back. God wants to be with us. He desires us, our whole selves. The question we must ask is: are we comfortable surrendering to God's desire to draw close? Surrender is a word that for many of us brings up images of depleted resources and white flags. Surrender is a bad thing that only happens to those who lose an effort. It is something that is forced by a conquering body or a circumstance. It is certainly not something that any sane person would choose to do.

Or is it? Let's back up for a moment. At Christmas, we celebrate just how much God loves us and wants to be with us.



to be with us and guide us in this human life, why wouldn't we want to surrender to that kind of perfect love? It is hard for us to understand perfect love because human love is *im*perfect.

Truly human and divine, Jesus came to share in all of our joys, trials, temptations and successes. This is one of the great mysteries of our faith, and something that makes all the difference if we really take it to heart. If God loves us so much that He sends us His son

God is perfect. God is not a conqueror. Yet God *does* invite us to surrender.

Unlike the world's definition of surrender, surrendering to God's will frees us! Just like God asked our Blessed Mother Mary (whose feast we celebrate on New Year's Day!), God invites us to offer Him our whole "yes" — a white flag of sorts — a pure statement of our trust in God's presence and providence. Sometimes our yes is not as complete as it could be, but we have a lifetime of opportunities to continue trying to give God our full yes.



If we say yes and surrender our whole selves to God's will, we must then be prepared to act on it. We must be willing to surrender our fear, our anxiety, our schedules and our loved ones to God's perfect plan. We must resolve to live lives of prayer, service and generosity. In this way, our lives can become a witness to God's perfect plan and provision so that others can see and be inspired to surrender to God's love and sustenance in their lives.

Resolutions can be daunting, but surrender is freeing. Surrendering our will to God is not easy, but neither is sticking to resolutions. There are many ways we see, hear, and know God's will. Perhaps the best resolution we can make this year is to surrender to God's loving will for us and for the world. God will show you. Let 2024 be the year we grow in trust of God and surrender. — Amberly Boerschinger

LOOK. LISTEN. RESPOND.

"We have seen his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." (MT 2:2)

The magi were looking. It was not an accident that they journeyed to Bethlehem, having seen the star at its rising. They were attentive, searching, and ready to go when the time was right.

Others saw too. The shepherds were on the night watch. They were on the lookout for predators and thieves. They were stunned to see instead the glory of the Lord around them. At the angels' announcement, they also journeyed to Bethlehem, eager to see for themselves the miracle of the newborn in the most unexpected of places, the manger.

Have you seen his star? Not a physical star, but the light of God's love. Light pierces darkness, illumines shadows, and diminishes the fear of night. Do you see the glory of the Lord around you? If there is one thing that we should carry with us through the Christmas season and beyond, it is this: God is with us in all of our searching, hoping, and longing. God is here, in the midst of our everyday lives. The light of God's love shines brightly, through all of the darkness, fear, frustration, and anxiety we may experience in life. God wants to break through and to bring us peace.

Impact this year

Use these ideas to bring faith to your daily life and find life in faith in the coming year.

Pray every day. Tell God what is in your heart and on your mind, and allow God's love to touch you.

Truly participate in the Mass, and in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Open your heart and mind to the Lord.

Read the Bible. Find words of encouragement, consolation, and challenge in Sacred Scripture.

This month, we hear the stories of ones who heard, listened, and responded to God's love. Samuel heard the voice of God before he was fully prepared to understand. Once aware that God was speaking to him, he earnestly responded, "Speak, for your servant is listening." (1 Sam 3:10) The first disciples heard the voice of the Lord and they immediately followed him.

Do we see, listen, and respond to God's love? Notice that once the magi and shepherds saw the light of God's love, once Samuel and the disciples heard the Lord's voice, they were open and ready to respond. They brought their gifts, their very selves, to the Lord, allowed the light of God's love to change them, and became vessels of that love for others.

In this new year, be like the magi and the shepherds, ready to see the Lord in your midst, in the eyes of a loved one, the presence of Christ at Mass, an unexpected moment of tenderness. When you see God's love, be ready to offer him homage, and grow in love and grace.

Be like Samuel, Simon, Andrew, James, and John. Hear the voice of the Lord and respond. Bring your gifts, your very selves, to the Lord, saying, "Here I am, send me."

Talk with others about faith. You are likely to be inspired by their sharing, and they from yours.

Learn more about our Catholic faith through study, small faith sharing, and adult faith formation.

Read the lives of the saints. They show us that God speaks to each of us as ordinary people with the ups and downs of daily life.

Pay attention to those who are poor, lonely, ill, or in prison. Not only do they need our care, they also witness to God's compassion for the weak and broken.

Serve with a glad and generous heart. You will see God's love in action.