

[Numbers 6:22-27; Psalm 67; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21]

Even though we don't know exactly what is ahead as we enter a New Year, here are some redemptive ways we can move forward and fulfill what God has for us.

Enter the New Year free of any spiritual baggage. The first thing is to let go of the baggage of the past. Release your grip upon any old hurts, wounds, or disappointments. They can bring with them the weights of bitterness, resentment, and unforgiveness. These are the things that your soul can not afford to lug around for another year.

The next thing is not to pick up the baggage of the future. God does not want you weighed down with cares, anxiety, and worry. Live each day, moment by moment, in the sufficiency of His grace, and trust Him in all things for tomorrow's needs.

With hands free to receive what God has for you, and in imitation of Mary, the Mother of God, whom we honor today, focus your faith on these five things:

1. BE AVAILABLE:

Like Mary, be a willing vessel available for every day, occasional use, or to be set aside for special occasions by the Lord. The Potter who formed you, knows best how to use you...and when!

2. BE DEPENDENT:

Be aware that you are totally in need of Him to be the One Who has called you to be, what He asks you to be, and to do what He asks you to do. Lean into His life and strength with 100 percent of your heart...that's what thriving branches do when they're in the vine.

3. BE FAITHFUL:

Your faith in the New Year will be rewarded by Him. Seek His approval...live under His smile...stay with it... Choose obedience over sacrifice. He is using you in more ways than you know.

4. *BE GRATEFUL:*

Live in the atmosphere of thankfulness...it's one of the healthiest ways to live.

5. *BE CONFIDENT:*

The Lord knows those who are His. The Lord knows your name, because He calls you by name. You are no stranger to the Lord. God knows every detail of your life, and every need you face. Daily, you have His undivided attention.

He understands where you are coming from -- He knows your intentions, and motivations -- He knows your deepest desires and quietest prayers.

On this Solemn Feast of the Maternity of Mary, I came upon this surprising and inspiring article from Catholic Vote, a Catholic news feed service:

CV NEWS FEED – In the days leading up to Christmas 2021, ABC News' FiveThirtyEight, which reports on politics, science, and sports, tweeted out a call for abortion stories.

“Do you have an abortion story?”

As more states pass restrictions on abortions and the Supreme Court considers a possible overturn of *Roe v Wade*, FiveThirtyEight reporter Amelia Thomason-DeVoe wanted to “document the impact of these shifts... to include the voices of people who have had abortions in the U.S.”

The results were probably not what she expected.

Within hours, the original Tweet thread received thousands of replies. It became an inspiring Christmas testimony to the beauty of life, the courage of parents who choose life, and the joy of children.

Hundreds of mothers and fathers replied to @FiveThirtyEight with stories of their brush with the abortion industry following a special needs diagnosis of their unborn child. Attaching a beautiful portrait of a smiling teenage girl, Sarah tweeted: “At the ultrasound for my 2nd pregnancy we were told our baby had Down Syndrome and her heart was incompatible with life. They encouraged us to end the pregnancy. She’s completely healthy.”

Women who chose to keep their baby in spite of family and cultural pressures to abort also shared photos and stories of their now-thriving children.

Their children also applauded mothers who kept them. Kenneth Landers knows he beat the odds: “Abortion was designed for people like me: low income, brown, fatherless. I’m 30 years old, helping my mother retire, thriving professionally and personally.”

Children whose mothers chose adoption over abortion praised the courage of their birth parents. April wrote: “Birthmothers who choose adoption over abortion are truly the most compassionate, unselfish, loving people.”

Adoptive parents joined the thread to express their deep gratitude to birth parents, acknowledging that they made brave decisions in a society that pressure them to abort. Along with a picture of his two beautiful daughters, Michael Robison tweeted, “I’m raising two amazing children, both rape babies.... Whose families wanted abortion to avoid shame... Instead, they are here bringing hope... how many stories of Hope get sucked out by vacuums & or ended by a pill?!?! [sic]”

FiveThirtyEight’s Christmas call for personal stories of abortions turned into one of the season’s most heartwarming and prolife Twitter events.

Like Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the Lord knows where you are. You are God’s appointed servant. He knows how He has gifted and equipped you. He knows all He will do for you both now and in the future. He didn’t make a mistake regarding His gifts and His call upon your life, and He will never confuse you with someone else. Whenever there’s a need to begin again, it’s important to remember three things: 1. Starting over doesn’t mean you are a failure. 2. Being willing to try again brings new discoveries. 3. Accepting the need to change is often the first step towards success. Enter this New Year with God, and stay under the rest and strength of His Hand...He has chosen the field where He wants you to work and to flourish. Happy New Year! AMEN!