

Column

Janus is believed by many to be the oldest of the gods worshiped by the ancient Romans. He was believed to look after doors and gateways, which included the gate leading into the future – the New Year. Understandably, the Romans called the first month of the year *Januarius*, that designation, of course, remains down to the present day. We still call the first month, ‘January’.

In ancient statuary, Janus was often depicted as having two faces. Each looked in opposite directions – one back into the past, the other forward into the future. If you think about it, this double viewing is what we do at the beginning of each new year.

We look back and reflect on the events of the past 12 months. There will be somethings we wish to hold onto, others that we are quite happy to let go.

2020 has been a year like none other. Fear of an unseen enemy, a tiny virus, has stalked, not just the homes of this nation, but of the world. Civil unrest has broken out in many of our cities, resulting in the death of a number of innocent people and the needless destruction of private property. Finally, there has been fierce political turmoil and bitter accusations of voter fraud. All of these, I dare say, are things we want to leave behind.

Meanwhile, the trials of 2020 have produced a number of bright spots. I am thinking, for example, of how earlier this year neighbour began looking after neighbour. If an elderly person or someone in a high-risk category needed groceries, many stepped forward to help.

The lockdown produced more time for serious thinking. During the height of the pandemic, I received a number of enquiries from people who wanted to know where God was in all of this. Others were pondering if what was happening in 2020 was a sign that our Lord’s Second Coming was nigh. Surely, this hunger for spiritual understanding is one thing we would like to take with us into the new year.

It is very appropriate that New Year’s Day falls exactly a week after Christmas Day. How so? Well, because at Christmas many who don’t give the religious aspect of this holiday a great deal of thought -- even they -- get caught up in the spirit of the season. They may even go out of their way to be extra kind and generous.

Then comes New Year’s, and some will make an attempt to hold on to that goodwill by making resolutions. It is as if in their bone of bones – whether

they acknowledge it or not – they know this is the way people are meant to live. Unfortunately, within a week or so into January they run out of steam and fall back into their old self-centred ways.

It is here we find the real link between Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Or, we might say, it is here we find the place where these two heads of Janus join. If you think about it, making New Year's resolutions is really nothing more than trying to take the Christmas spirit into the new year.

It's a way of trying to get a bit nearer to what God meant us to be, but it usually doesn't work. We find ourselves powerless to keep the train moving under our own steam, at least over the long haul.

What is needed is not more of the 'Christmas spirit', a momentary burst of warm feelings, but the Spirit of Christ. He and He alone has the power to enable us to carry on.

The good news is that He is pledged to give such power to all who will allow Him to come into their lives. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

At this time of the year, more than resolutions are needed. What is needed is nothing short of a revolution, a revolution in which selfish self is dethrone and the selfless Christ is enthroned. Let the revolution begin in your life in 2021!

Almighty and most merciful God, grant, we beseech thee, that by the indwelling of thy Holy Spirit, we may be enlightened and strengthened for thy service; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the same Spirit ever, one God, world without end. Amen.

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