

THE GOOD NEWS

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ESNE
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“LOOK BACK ON THE PAST WITH GRATITUDE, LIVE THE PRESENT WITH PASSION AND EMBRACE THE FUTURE WITH HOPE”

My thoughts this month revolve around the title of the newsletter, a quotation taken from Pope Francis' 2015 Year of Consecrated Life; it is a way to see life from a perspective of true Faith. It forces us to take a look at the past, present and future that undoubtedly comprises a faithful life, today.

As we start a New Year and say goodbye to 2020, a year that we weren't expecting filled with the devastating effects of the pandemic and many other challenges surrounding it, we are still standing strong. Holding our ground and the opportunity to live a new normal based upon the Faith we have learned from the lessons of 2020.

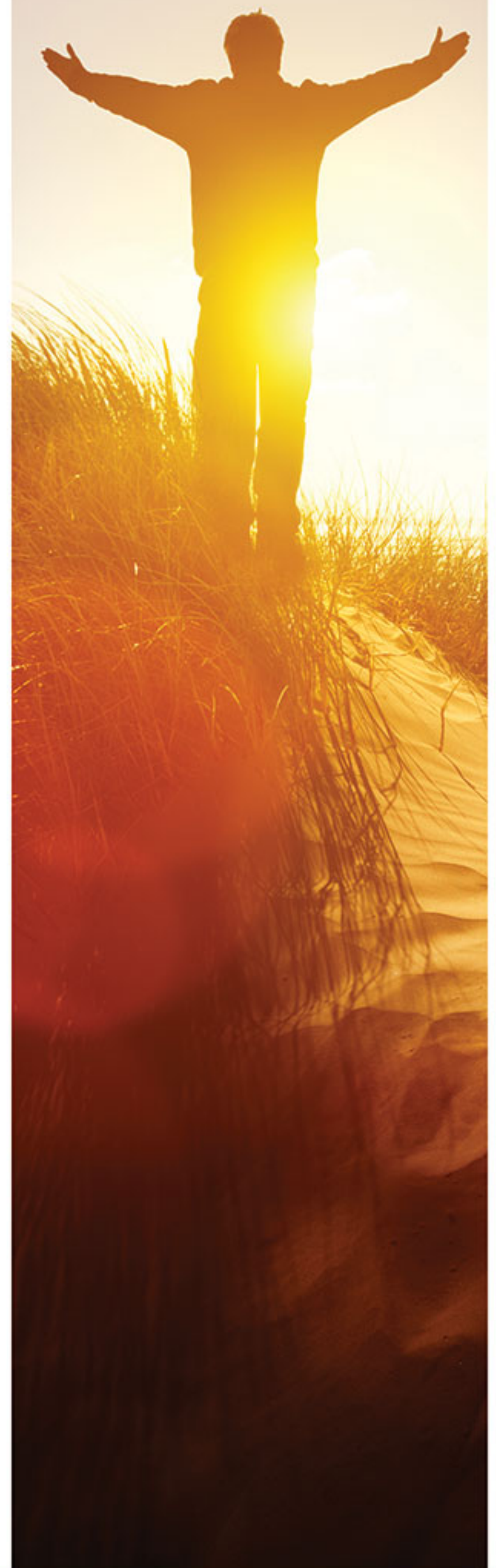
Look back on the past with gratitude

How do you see your past? No doubt, each one of us has had sad experiences as well as beautiful ones. The Pope is inviting us to remember the past with GRATITUDE, but how can I do that when my past has been so painful? Of course, each of us has free will and can decide what part to remember and how to remember it. Let me share two of my many experiences as a child.

I was 4 or 5 years old and lived in a "vecindad" in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. A vecindad is comprised of many small rooms lined up and some of the rooms were made of cardboard like the one we lived in; there was just one bathroom in the center of all the vecindads for everyone to use. My mom, a working mom, left me with some inexperienced teenage girls to take care of me. These girls would often neglect me; it was at those times that I go outside to play with other kids, from the surrounding vecindads, that was when my neighbors would see me and ask me to go to a small store on the corner of the street to buy them something like milk or tortillas.

One day, a neighbor asked me to buy her some groceries, when I got back I knocked at the lady's door, at that very moment a man was shouting "flour tortillas fresh made!"; he was selling them. So, she shouted back to the man "I want to buy one dozen", as he came over, the delicious smell of the tortillas was overwhelming and in that moment I asked my neighbor if she could give me just one tortilla in exchange for my usual tip. Maybe I was hungry, I don't know, but the lady just looked at me and said NO! I do not remember my reaction. But I do remember the sting of her refusal. That memory brings me sorrow and sadness, even today, if I choose to remember it.

Another neighbor, Juanita lived in that same vecindad housing as I. One day, I was really hungry and in desperation decided to knock on her door and asked if she could give me a taco. I remember looking up eagerly and hearing her say "of course, dear, just a minute". With open arms and a big smile she invited me in and prepared a warm bean taco wrapped in paper, so I wouldn't burn my hand. I did this other times as well, because the girls in charge of my care almost never fed me, and every time I knock at Juanita's door I received the same loving response from her; what a loving memory.



I do not know why I didn't tell my mom about this at the time? Maybe because I knew that she always provide for my support. Maybe I was embarrassed or afraid but I did tell her much later. I often recall Juanita's generosity and her neighborly love towards me because I choose to remember it, instead of remembering all the many refusals and disappointment I have known.

Why am I telling you these stories? Because we all have a choice, to remember the neighbor that would not share a tortilla with me or to recall the generosity of my neighbor Juanita, who with a grateful heart loved me. So, in my case, I often choose to look back on the past with gratitude because God did not leave me alone in my lack but sent Juanita, when I needed her most; that is what I choose to remember and it makes me happy.

I certainly had many bad experiences in my childhood. But I also had good experiences, having around me people that were kind to me and my mom, like Juanita. Let us decide to remember with gratitude both and leave the rest in the hands of God, for we all will be accountable to Him in the end for our thoughts. If we keep in our hearts the evil done to us, we will not be happy; Psalms 144:15 NLT calls us to be happy "Yes, happy are those who have it like this; happy indeed are those whose God is the LORD". The other option of course is that we are left bitter, stripped of our peace and live in denial of the peace given to us in John 14:27 NLT "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled..."

So, despite all the challenges and devastation that happened in 2020, I choose to remember the thousands of acts of kindness, the millions of people who turned back to God and the untold families who are now reconciled. GOD CAN GET DIAMONDS OUT OF RUBBLE; but remember, it is only through enormous pressure that rubble is turned into diamonds.

Live the present with passion

The New Year, brings with it many resolutions. However, statistics show that as the days and weeks go by the courage of those resolutions diminishes and many just fade away; of those that remain the passion often has turned to mediocrity.

We are not called to be mediocre. We are called to live the present with passion and purpose; to run the race, crossing the finish line and through it all to preserve so to be called Good and Faithful by our Lord.

This is something that I say in my morning prayers "HOLY SPIRIT, GUIDE ME TO DO THE WILL OF THE FATHER AND SON. PLEASE GRANT ME LOVING CARE FOR OTHERS, HUMILITY, WISDOM, POWER, RESILIENCE, GRATITUDE AND PERSEVERANCE."

Discover your potential this year and be moved by Faith in Christ and the divine force of the Holy Spirit, ask for Their gifts and especially for gratitude and perseverance. Remember, everything is possible for those who believe.

Embrace the future with Hope

The future is uncertain but we cannot live in fear. Let us be faithful and carry around the flag of Hope, planting it wherever God leads us. May the Hope offered to us by Jesus shine in our lives every day as a beacon of gratitude and certainty!

Fear paralyzes life and kills courage. Satan's work is to create doubts, like he did with Eve that caused her to fall at the very beginning of Creation and in our lives today, in the New Year. Do not let the enemy make you believe something that is not true, don't fall into the illusion that is set before you. Trust that this New Year will bring upon us many blessings and believe this from the depths of your heart. We know we will face challenges but let us remember Jesus' words "**Do not be afraid!**" Matthew 14:22; "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:20. "I will not leave you orphans" John 14:18. God promises to be with you, but you and I have to remember this, He honors His promises and His promises are often kept in small ways like through Juanita. #VivaJuanita!

We will continue growing thanks to you

On behalf of ESNE, I want to thank you for the past year and for keeping your promises. For your contributions have allowed us to see the salvation of thousands upon thousands of souls who, during the lockdowns, challenges and devastation, have connected to ESNE through ESNE's various platforms (TV, Radio, Streaming, Social Media) where they learned about the Love of God, seeking comfort and relief from the uncertainty of the world and as a result have transformed themselves and the world through Christ Jesus and His voice, ESNE to a wanting world, thanks to you and your perseverance to support ESNE. Like Juanita our doors are open for prayer anytime, for we serve you with open hearts, to help as we can.

Together, we have made much progress and with Hope I continue to thank you for your trust in the good work of ESNE during 2021. ESNE will continue growing because we continue to trust the Mercy of God and ask Him to multiply your generosity; pressed down, shaken and overflowing, a hundred fold and more in the New Year.

May the Love of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit be your strength and may our Mother, Our Lady of Guadalupe, be our Lady of Victory in 2021 protecting us and interceding on our behalf with Her Son Jesus Christ. Amen.



Noel Díaz