

## Mary the Mother of God - New Year, 2023

### Keep Your Head Right

Pastor Stephen Brown taught swimming and diving for a number of years. He tells about a young boy named Billy. Billy had watched so many professional divers and wanted so much to dive like them that he refused to take time to learn the basics. Time after time Brown tried to help Billy see that the most important thing about diving was to keep his head in the proper position. If his head entered the water properly, Brown explained, the rest of his body would enter the water properly--at least, more properly than it had been. Billy would dive into the pool, do a belly flop, and come up grinning, "Mr. Brown," he would shout, "were my feet together?" "Billy, I don't care whether your feet were together or not," Brown shouted back. "Make sure your head is straight, then everything else will work out." The next time Billy would stand on the edge of the pool and really concentrate. Then he would dive and, once again, make a mess of it. "Mr. Brown, were my hands together?" "Billy," Brown would groan in frustration, "I'm going to get you a neck brace and weld it onto your head. For the hundredth time, if your head is right the rest of you will be right. If your head is wrong, the rest of you will be wrong."

And isn't that true in all of life? If our head is wrong, our marriage will probably suffer. If our head is wrong, our priorities will be fouled up. If our head is wrong, it may even affect our health in a negative way. God understands our distress and God seeks to make us new persons so that we can handle our distress more effectively. (by Stephen Brown from *When Being Good Isn't Good Enough*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. Adapted by King Duncan)

### Strain Forward

Paul gives us specific directions for living each day. Paul in Philippians says, "Forgetting what lies behind, I strain forward to what is ahead." If you have ever been to a circus, you've no doubt seen the huge bull elephants chained to a peg in the ground. Perhaps it has occurred to you that the elephant could easily pull the peg out of the ground and escape. However, he does not try. As a baby elephant he was tied to a huge stake that he could not pull out of the ground. Weeks of pulling and tugging only wore a trench around the stake, and finally he gave up. Now that he is full-grown, with great strength and the physical ability to pull the peg out of the ground, he remembers only the futility of past efforts and does not even attempt to escape. He is conditioned to failure. If you are straining forward to what is ahead this New Year, let us make a fresh start and forget the things that may have been holding us back in the past. (by Arthur Caliendo of Marble Collegiate Church, New York City)

### **Even This Shall Pass Away:**

Theodore Tilton (1835-1907) was the editor of *The Independent*, a New York weekly newspaper run by the Congregationalists. Tilton was also a poet who wrote the 'King's Ring.' This poem tells the story of a Persian king who engraved the maxim on his signet ring, 'Even this shall pass away.' The king was very wealthy, and while he received more wealth, he would ask himself, "What is wealth?" Then he would answer his question by saying, "Even this shall pass away." The king had many friends, and they would always make him happy. But he cried, "O loving friends of mine... Even this shall pass away." The lady he crowned as his queen was the fairest of all, but he knew "mortal flesh should come to clay, even this shall pass away." One day the king was wounded in the war, and he said, "Pain is hard to bear, but with patience day by day, even this shall pass away." Later, when they put up his statue in the public square to honor him, he asked himself, "What is fame? Fame is but a slow decay; even this shall pass away." We have heard that 'time and tide wait for none.' But as the Persian king realized, not only time and tide, but nothing in this life waits for us. Everything will pass away.

We must remember this truth, especially when we are saying goodbye to another year in our life and entering a new one. Yes, our wealth, beauty, joys, and sorrows will pass away. Our lives will pass away. However, our acts of kindness and love will remain in the hearts of everyone we come across. Moreover, our faith assures us that our souls will live forever with God after we pass away from this world, provided we love him and obey his will always in our life here on earth. Hence, as we begin the New Year, the focus of our life should be primarily on things that will help us to be with God forever in peace and joy. I wish and pray that your New Year may be filled with love and acts of kindness that will last not only for the New Year but also forever. (Fr. Jose P, CMI)

### **Smiling child and his mother:**

There is a beautiful little story about a long, tedious train journey, made one Christmas day by some elderly nursing home residents who were on their way to a vacation spot. At one station, a young mother with a small child entered the train. The child smiled at all the grim faces around him and began moving from one lap to another talking, shouting with joy and chatting with everyone. Instantly, the grim and silent atmosphere in the train was changed to one of joy and happiness. — Today we remember with joy and gratitude, how Mary and her Divine Son Jesus transformed a hopeless, joyless and sinful world into a place of joy and happiness. (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).