

A close-up of a lit sparkler with bright sparks and a dark background filled with warm, out-of-focus bokeh lights.

# Spiritual

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

*(1/10/21)*

# REDEDICATION

AS A SPIRITUAL WOMAN OF GOD

The act of rededication solidifies our relationship with the Lord.

If there are areas of our lives that need to be renewed, a great foundation is humbling oneself and receiving forgiveness in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Good evening Ladies. Happy New Year! We hope that all of you are well and looking forward to a great 2021.

As every New Year comes around, it is very common for us to make New Year resolutions,,: "I'm going to lose weight, I'm going to join the gym, I'm going to spend less. I am sure there are others that I have missed.

Have you ever made a Spiritual New Year's resolution?

How do we rededicate our lives to God as Women of Faith and have a spiritual renewal?

As we reflect back on 2020, we may feel deflated from all the events that were so pronounced during the year. Maybe you have a little less hope, a little less happiness than when you started 2020. But 2021 is here and it comes with hope for a better future. As Women of Faith, we can start with our own spiritual renewal.

## WOF: REDEDICATION

# PRAYER

Presented by Domi

I recently read an article in “The Word Among Us” January issue.

It asked the question: “What do you think Jesus would say if a talk-show host were to ask him what his top priorities were? Maybe Jesus would answer, “Loving People”, “Reaching out to the poor and less fortunate”, or maybe He would say “Spreading the good news about the kingdom of heaven”.

All good answers. But if He were asked which was the MOST important one, He would probably answer, “Staying connected to my Father.”

And so it should be with us. Perhaps in this time of isolation due to the Covid 19 pandemic, we feel a big disconnect, disconnect with our church, disconnect from our church friends and family, disconnect from the world, disconnect from God.

Our constant companions are often the news shows on TV, the internet, facebook, Netflix. All these activities are fine in moderation but we might ask ourselves:

- What positive thing have we gained from these activities?
- How have I gotten closer to God?
- How have I renewed my desire to be a better Catholic and servant of the Lord?

Perhaps, the start of a new year is a great time to reevaluate, refocus and adjust our behavior accordingly.

In our research as a group, we found several websites and articles with great suggestions for starting our spiritual renewal.

Off The Grid News ([Offthegridnews.com](http://Offthegridnews.com)) and Faith Gateway ([faithgateway.com](http://faithgateway.com)) offer us several ideas.

1. Pray every day to hear God's will for our life and become obedient to God's will.
2. Read the Bible every day to understand God's character and his ways.

Scripture tells us that even Jesus made prayer central to His life.

**Mark 1:35** "rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed".

As we heard this past Sunday, Jesus prayed after His baptism:

**Luke 3:21-22** “After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Jesus prayed before His transfiguration: **Luke 9:28-29**

About eight days after he said this, he took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white.

Jesus even prayed before His arrest and crucifixion:

**Matthew 26:36-45** “Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane,\* and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.”

*The one thing in common in all these times that Jesus prayed is that he prayed FIRST, seeking God’s guidance and then he acted out of what he received from His Father.*

We too can make prayer a priority over activity as Jesus did. And as suggested by faithgateway.com [“Pray About It”](#).

Do we start our day by checking our phones or computers, turning on the television or reading the newspaper? Perhaps a better way would be to “connect with the Father”.

One way to start the day every morning is with David's prayer

### **Psalm 51:12-13**

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; restore within me a sense of being brand new. Do not throw me far away from Your presence, and do not remove Your Holy Spirit from me."

We can follow that with a pause at noon to pray the Angelus. It only takes a few minutes.

We can also pray with the televised mass.

Catholic TV (channel 15 on Spectrum) is one station that carries the mass at different times of the day. It also offers other beautiful prayer times such as morning Divine office, the rosary and the chaplet of the divine mercy as well as many inspirational and uplifting talk shows.

And as Nora O'Donnell says, "if you can't watch us live, set your DVR and watch us later."

And then there is simply, Talking to God, in your own words.

### **As we hear in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

"Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.h

The second suggestion from Off The Grid News is to “read the Bible daily”. This activity is one that requires a lot of discipline. If we use an aid to guide us through the bible, we will achieve this goal. There are reading plans available online and at Christian book stores such as Cathedral Book Store. These can be the Bible in one year, two years even three years.

There is also a podcast that Mari told us about that guides us through the bible in chronological order. You can listen daily or listen to several on one day if you get behind. You can also print out a guide that gives you the reading plan in print. This can be found at <http://ascensionpress.com/bibleinayear>

I recently checked out this website and found out that is inspired by the Jeff Cavins series, The Bible Timeline learning series.

I think you will really enjoy this journey through the Bible.

This last Spiritual Resolution ties in well with the first one to pray.

Give Your Time & Attitude to the Lord

Let’s resolve to give our attitudes to the Lord. In this way we can make a difference at home, in the workplace, at the store, on the roads, and even at church, in all our interactions with other people. When we pray, it is easy for

us to have a better attitude when confronted with challenges during the day.

As one of the Upper Room meditations says, “ When we choose to worship God no matter our circumstances,, God can do things that to the world seem impossible. No matter how exhausted we are under the weight of our struggle, God does not want us to despair. God is with us as we persevere.

Perhaps we could make this scripture passage part of our resolution:

Colossians 3:14-15,17

“And over all these put on love. Love is the perfect tie to bind these together.

And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful!

And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”



**WOF: REDEDICATION**

# **START A PRAYER JOURNAL**

Presented by Mary

## **WHAT ARE PRAYER JOURNALS?**

Starting a prayer journal is a great way to get organized and start keeping track of all the great things that God is going to do through you!

## **HOW TO USE A PRAYER JOURNAL**

Have you ever wondered how to use a prayer journal? There are many ways you can add a prayer journal to your prayer life. But I have found that there are some important elements that make this special time that we spend with the Lord effective and leave us feeling empowered by Him, heard by Him and loved by Him. Prayer journaling is an act of worship to our Lord for just how awesome He is and how wonderful it is just to be His children.

## **START WITH A JOURNAL AND MAKE IT YOURS**

You might already have a journal or notebook that is begging to be used in such a humble fashion. Or maybe just sheets of notebook paper that could be put into a

binder. Claim this as yours and begin. Personalize it if you like, used colored pens, stickers, whatever makes it personal to you.

Find your space where you can enjoy writing and spending quiet time. For me, anywhere that is free from the distractions of the day where I can sip coffee, get comfortable and reflect on what is on my mind works for me.

## **HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUR PRAYER JOURNAL**

Depending on your style and whether you are super simple or highly structured depends on how you might want to organize your journal. In the past when I have journaled, I have kept it simple. I would write my thoughts, prayers and inspirations daily. I had a separate little notebook for the names of people and intentions that I carried with me. This could be easily included in a separate section of your prayer journal. It can be even more specific if you want to create sections for family, friends, work colleagues. You might also want to include prayers of thanks and blessings. You could also just include these topics as a guide as you journal daily.

## **SCRIPTURES OR IMPORTANT BIBLE VERSES**

**Pray the word** - I think the most important part of this process is to seek out answers in God's Word. The Lord has empowered us by the blood of Christ with so many things. Whether you are praying for your children, your husband, for healing, or over your finances, there is a scripture that

can be applied. When we apply the word and we are speaking life into those situations and using the power given to us by Christ, the Lord can move. Maybe the most important benefit to prayer journaling is that we are renewing our minds to what the Lord thinks of us and our situations and allows His word to encourage us! This is the key to having not just a journal, but something powerful and life changing.

*Psalm 119:105*

*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.*

## **DAILY PRAYER JOURNAL**

**Write what is on your heart** - Be honest! The Lord longs for us to communicate with Him and share with Him what's on our hearts. A daily prayer journal is a wonderful way to do just that! He is our Father and our friend and just like any other friendship, communication is key. He loves for us to seek wisdom from Him and to draw from His peace! He has called us His friends and he is a trustworthy confidant!

## **THINGS I AM THANKFUL FOR**

**List what you are thankful for** - When you are setting up your prayer journal, consider adding a section where you can list things that you are thankful for. When I started actively listing things every day that I was thankful for, I could see a change in my attitude and mood immediately. It is *impossible* not to feel gratitude when we are focusing on

the wonderful things that we DO have instead of what we don't have.

## GOOD THINGS THAT HAPPENED TODAY

There is power in listing all the good things that happened in a day. This is so helpful for me to focus on what *did* go right, and where the Lord has already blessed me. Writing everything down in your prayer journal is also training your brain to find the diamonds in each day, however mundane it might seem!

*Phillippians 4:8*

*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

## PRAYERS THE LORD ANSWERED TODAY

**Remember the prayers He has answered** - A great section you could include in your prayer journal or a daily prayer journal is that you can keep a record of all of the prayers that the Lord has answered. The Lord says to remember the wonders He has done! It is so easy for us to forget all of the prayers, large and small, that He has answered for us. He is such a good Father and it is amazing to look back and see how He has brought us through difficult times and times of uncertainty

WOF: REDEDICATION

# FALLING SHORT

Presented by Mari

I may have suggested this idea for a resolution, because I find myself falling short. Never quite reaching to the ideals I've set for myself spiritually. Best intentions without follow through. My goals are always out of reach because i make wishes, not plans. I am not setting myself up for a meaningful relationship with God, because i am not giving him meaningful time. So if you are the same as me, I ask you to join me in settings our spiritual goals fo the year.

We are all in different stages of our life, our journey, and our faith. Our goals will be different, but our goals will also change with us. Our ultimate destination is a fulfilled life and death with God. Truth is, some journeys will be straighter. some will have more stops, and others will get lost. No matter how you get there, He will be with you every step of the way. That is what really matters. Tough, easy, smooth, rocky, zig saggy or a straight line. It is blessed and Holy as long as you are taking your journey with Christ.

— — ***So I ask you to close your eyes for a moment.*** — —

Think of where you are on your map. Not someone else's map, but yours.

- Are you not spending time with God like you want? Do you need more date nights with Him
- Are you in charge of teaching a child the joy of our faith? Do you need to go back to school and learn your Bible
- Did you end up in the pits of despair, suffering and lonely? Do you need some God therapy.
- Are you lost or forget your keys at home and need to go back to that last checkpoint and start fresh.
- Did you forget and are not as active as you once were? Do you need to exercise that faith?
- Are you going to mass and saying your daily prayers, but are on autopilot. giving God your leftover time and not your best.

— — **Open your Eyes** — —

Now that you can see where you are, it's time to set up your next mile marker. When setting your goal(s) for the year,

## **ASK FOR GUIDANCE**

Setting your goals for a whole year can be confusing. Sometimes, there's just so much you want to do that you don't know where to start.

If you're stuck in a rut, don't be afraid to ask for His guidance. Pray that you'll be enlightened as to his plans for you. All of us are here for a purpose, including you. Lift up all your doubts and aspirations and pray that He'll lead you to the path that He has prepared for you.

## **EVALUATE YOUR YEAR**

You cannot change the past but you can learn from it.

Think about your goals last year. Which of them have you achieved? Which of them proved too much? Where do you think you went wrong? Asking yourself these questions can help you formulate a better plan for the year ahead. knowing where or how you struggle is helpful.

## **EMBRACE YOUR STRUGGLES**

We account for failure, time delays, and accommodations in our everyday life. We leave 10 minutes early in case of traffic, you tell you sister (ahem Me) to meet 30 minutes early because she's always late. You put gutter rails on a first time bowler's lane, so they don't get discouraged with never hitting a pin, there are rails on the side of the road to prevent accidents from going off the road, you use a cane to accommodate a bad leg. It's okay to set buffers in your spiritual life as well. I put an alert in my calendar so I remember to have God as an important part of my day. I put religious podcasts and audio books onto my phone, because that is how i retain information. i make notes during sermons, because my mind will wander if i don't.

## **BE REALISTIC**

Having goals is good. But having too many goals can be exhausting. In life and in goal-setting, one thing is consistently true: never bite off more than you can chew.

Make sure that your goals are possible and attainable. Start with the basics. Avoid aiming for things that you know you can never do. You can always add more if you feel you are ready. Don't burn yourself out on everything you want to do.

Instead of achieving your objectives, you might end up too stressed and frustrated. It can lead you to lose your drive and give up. This is a marathon, not a race.

## **ENVISION YOUR GOALS**

Picture yourself a year from now. What's your spiritual life like?

Creating a vision of your goals will help you break it down into smaller actionable plans. Imagine the things you want to achieve. If it helps, list it all down in paper. Then create a graph or a diagram – whatever it is that can help you envision your spiritual objectives.

What does success look like. Is it praying 5 minutes or is it praying the rosary every night. Is it spending an hour every Thursday night to read the bible and journal... or is it reading a new saint biography every 2 months.



## DON'T BE TOO HARD ON YOURSELF

If you fail to achieve a goal, don't be discouraged. More importantly, don't punish yourself for the things you weren't able to do.

Just keep on trying. God sees your struggles and pains. He will never forsake you. Pray for fortitude and the strength to keep moving forward.

As Dory says' just keep swimming swimming swimming

## EXAMPLES

- ▶ Actively take part in church
- ▶ Pray daily
- ▶ Keep a spiritual journal
- ▶ Practice forgiveness
- ▶ Give back
- ▶ Converse with God daily
- ▶ Read religious books

**Actively take part in church services.** Attending it is not enough. You need to be in there physically, mentally and spiritually.

**Make daily prayer a habit.** Just a simple prayer a few minutes each day will do. You can do it every morning upon waking up or before you go to bed. Over time, it will develop into a habit.

*Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. — James 5:16 ESV*

**Keep a spiritual journal.** Use it to pour your thoughts and daily reflections. It makes for a motivating read whenever you feel down.

**Practice forgiveness.** Forgiving someone who has wronged you will not only heal relationships. It will give you peace of mind too.

*“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”  
— Luke 6:37*

**Give back.** Doing charity doesn't have to be only during Christmas and Thanksgiving. Strive to be a blessing to others every single day. It doesn't have to always be the same thing. You can volunteer at the food pantry on Fridays with Candie, do meals on wheels like Valerie and One L Michele, decorate the priest cemetery with Argie & Janie, write cards to nursing homes, donate socks to homeless.

*I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger, and you took me into your home. — Matthew 25:35*

**Converse with God daily.** Find a few minutes each day to spend alone with God. Tell him about the things you're thankful for this day as well as the things that you're worried about. Talk to him as you would a friend.

**Read encouraging books.** Aside from the bible, inspirational books are a great way to attain spiritual fulfillment.

**WOF: REDEDICATION**

# **SIMPLIFY YOUR LIFE**

Presented by Candie

As you get older, you might begin to look around in your home and think, “where did all this stuff come from?” I certainly did and have been trying to declutter for the past several years. My goal is to simplify the task of getting rid of my things for my niece who will have to deal with them when I go to meet my Lord.

In our spiritual life, it’s also necessary to do some “cleaning out”. Simplicity involves decluttering our mental and emotional states of being. It means getting rid of the cobwebs and distractions that might keep us from focusing on what really matters. If you’re like me, it is extremely hard to keep my mind on my words when I am praying, reading scripture or trying to spend private time with God. My mind is always racing, thinking about the paperwork, reports and bookkeeping I need to get done for the Mission, the food pantry and tasks around the house I need to do for myself and my parents. My “honey-do” list is endless and I AM the “honey”!!

**SO HOW DO WE IMPROVE OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE?**

How do we begin to simplify our lives so we can devote time to prayer and time with God? We begin by examining what we are spending our time doing. Do I spend too much time on Facebook, on Netflix, reading the Inquirer or watching telenovelas? Is this time well spent? These aren't necessarily bad things but what do we get from them? If we identify five or ten minutes of wasted time throughout each day and instead do something that is faith-based, we will be on our way to experiencing a much closer and improved relationship with God. As the year progresses, you may find that you can gradually add more minute increments until you reach a half hour or hour per day. Some examples are replacing not so well used time with Bible reading, prayer, listening to a radio or television program discussing faith related topics, visiting Jesus in a church or chapel, developing a talent, project or hobby that can be used to help others. Maybe spend time writing a thoughtful card to someone who is grieving or lonely especially during this time of the pandemic. We can do some volunteer work or do something for the homeless or people in nursing homes. Perhaps we can call that someone we know is lonely and will keep us on the line for a long time because they simply need someone to listen to them. It will make us thankful for all the blessings God has showered on us personally. These are all Works of Mercy that the Catholic Church encourages us to do.

Most of us say, "I don't have time" to dedicate to intimate time with God but in reality we have all the needed time if we use it wisely.

Mari shared with us the concept of the three spoons. Each day we look at our "to do" list and decide which three tasks will be done that day - no more, no less. Using this technique will help us find those five or ten minutes we can devote to our relationship with God. Some flexibility needs to be allotted for those emergencies that arise, like taking a family member or friend to the doctor, taking care of a grandchild when the babysitter is sick, or a run to the grocery store for the elderly neighbor but we do our best with only three.

I know I spend too much time watching silly programs like Weakest Link and Ellen's Game of Games, CNN and sports. I usually do some type of work while sitting there just so I don't feel so guilty but I hear Jesus saying, "What about me?"

*Don't do it alone - team up!*

The worst mistake we can make in our spiritual journey is to give up when we do not meet our expectations or goals. It's important to keep our goals small and attainable. In order to do this, we are encouraging each of us to partner with one or two of the other ladies on this zoom meeting to help each other on their journey to enriching their relationship with God. Once a week, touch base by phone or distant meeting to share the progress made during that week in the practices each has chosen to do. It will keep us from

abandoning our effort to grow on our spiritual journey. There's nothing like having God and a Christian sister on earth to walk this journey with us! Even if we don't make any progress during a particular week, we share it with our partner(s), dust ourselves off and keep going. We can offer up our disappointment, discouragement and frustrations to God as a prayer. When it gets tough we surrender our struggles - our brokenness, tears, pain, suffering, and repeated weaknesses to God because when He asks us to give Him everything, He means EVERYTHING, even the parts of ourselves we don't like and would rather hide, remembering that He loves us dearly, no matter what, and that He will never reject us or abandon us.