

## A NEW YEAR – A TIME TO CHOOSE BETWEEN DARKNESS AND LIGHT

by Sister Brenda Walsh, Racine Dominican

Some time ago I heard a story of a young man on a horse, riding very swiftly along the road. A farmer was standing in a field along the roadside. He shouted at the man on horseback: “Sir, where are you going?” The rider turned around and shouted back: “Don’t ask me. Ask my horse.”

Many people today feel very much like that rider. They feel they are no longer in charge of their destiny and lack a sense of direction in their lives. They feel swept along by the pressures and distractions that control the lives of many today. They lack a sense of belonging and relatedness. This is often presented as one of the greatest needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. People from different cultures, races, economic conditions and backgrounds feel this lack at the very center of their lives. Many are hoping churches will step forward and help restore hope to children and their families and all people in this situation and address the root causes of the problem and not just cover up the cracks in the systems. That effort will challenge our values and lifestyle and more. Fr. Richard Rohr also points out that many of God’s people barely survive and even starve for lack of hope and meaning. He says many have made happiness and contentment largely impossible, based largely on having instead of being. (R. Rohr, Center for Action and Contemplation, Reflection for Dec. 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010).

Frequently our solutions for a better future are on a surface level, such as in the area of technology, business, addressing terrorism and other areas of concern. While exploration in these areas is required, we also need to find a deeper spiritual foundation to create a new and sustainable foundation for meaningful living.

Youth need a consistent message and lifestyle and adults to model it for them in a consistent way. From that stable base they can find their rightful place in our world and experience what a healthy, meaningful and happy life is meant to be. . What price are we willing to pay to restore balance and harmony and meaning for the sake of our present generation and for generations yet to come.

We need to name the structures and systems we have created that have fettered, disempowered and starved the majority of human being across the

globe. Beyond naming, we need the moral courage to put people before acquiring and possessing and begin relating to each other as brothers and sisters, not as Black or White, Brown or Yellow, rich or poor. We need a new vision for sharing power and resources for all people. people

We also need to redirect the trillions spent on armaments toward education, health care for all, job creation and other human needs. By continuing the armaments race, we are adding to the world's violence and death.

Consciousness of our human value is the only place to start. Vaclav Havel, former

President of the Czech Republic got it right when he said: "consciousness precedes being. Hope starts in the human heart." He believed we need to get in touch with real truth about ourselves and all human beings and from there to create systems and structures that support human life in all its forms.

When we reclaim our inner spiritual resources, that will enable us to have the moral courage to bring about needed change, starting with ourselves. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminds us "we are all tied together in a common garment of destiny." That is a good first step toward achieving unity and purpose, harmony and peace. We are all people of one body, mind and spirit, worthy of respect, encouragement and opportunities for growth. As Gandhi once said: "We must go broader and higher." By connecting with people globally, who are on a spiritual path, it will make all the difference. It is a journey worth starting and sustaining. Let us begin today with courage and hope.

A blessed New Year to all!