

# Something New

*A New Year Reflection*

Heart of Mary Women's  
Fellowship



[heartofmary.wf.com](http://heartofmary.wf.com)

## About this Study

We hope that you'll dive in, grow in the Lord, and share with others what beauty God reveals to you through it. If you are doing this study independently, know that we at HOM are here for you & that you also have a LARGE community of women through our website and social media that are participating too! You are truly never alone!

*If you are completing this study in a group setting - we are excited that you have found a local community to grow with, on top of our online sisterhood. Please use this study journal for your reference, resource, and more during your meetings and the personal time leading up to it.*

*Looking for a group? Please visit [www.heartofmarywf.com/groups](http://www.heartofmarywf.com/groups) to find a meet up near you.*

*Are you already in one but not listed on our website? Looking to start one? Please contact us for more information about our "HOM Ambassador" program. We have team members available specifically to help you grow a local group and lead other women through community, prayer, and devotion. Their support is available at all times. We also want to help you grow! We will advertise your group on our website & social media! And we have free resources for you as well. Please email us at [heartofmarywf@aol.com](mailto:heartofmarywf@aol.com)*

*Note: All written content has been reviewed by a Catholic spiritual director to cross check that all statements are align with the teachings and tenants of the Roman Catholic Church.*

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## Something New... A New Year Reflection



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*Do you know what I now know?  
You have made known to me the paths of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence.*

### [Acts 2:26-32](#)

A year ago, my husband and I were recovering from a serious car crash in which we were hit from behind while stopped at a red light. I woke up 15-20 minutes later with a neck brace on, secured to a gurney, hearing the voice of my husband as we traveled to the hospital by way of an ambulance. He later told me a man came and prayed over me as we

waited for the ambulance; I am grateful for that man. I would like to say that was the worst of it, but 2016 hadn't even started.

The year has been littered with physical, familial, career, and financial hardships. There were many days I figured had to be the end, as in the end. Throughout this year I have also attended more mass than ever before, so not all of it has been bad. That is the secret I have found: God is always there and God is always good.

No matter how dark it gets, God will always provide the light; I am grateful for that light. I remember writing my mom that as well, that I was grateful she taught me Jesus because He is always there.

My goal for 2017 is to look forward instead of dwelling on the past. I am grateful most for the opportunity to grow in self. I plan on using my time towards all things positive: [heartofmarywf.com](http://heartofmarywf.com), my family, some outdoor activities, growth in my "career", and investing more of myself to prayer-devotion and gratitude to our Lord, His father and our mother. I know I will fall short in my praise, but I also know that God has given me the time to show Him gratitude. -Michelle

Reflect: As we close out the year, spend some time writing down five things you are grateful for-one a day leading up to the new year. Today I am grateful for having the chance to share my story with each of you and learn your stories through the Heart of Mary.

Act: Make an effort today to look at the bright side of things. Instead of being upset at traffic, be grateful for your extra time in the car to pray your rosary. Instead of worrying about the bills due next week, be grateful for the opportunity to practice a small amount of poverty. I recommend taking the next five days to pause----and smell the roses.





## [Matthew 4:17 Joel 2:12-13](#)

2016 has been quite the year. A tremendous amount of grace was outpoured with the Jubilee Year of Mercy, mixed with the human evils of wars, terrorism, and crazy election cycles. It's left my heart spinning a bit, actually, the idea that so much grace can come forth in the midst of so much darkness. But we shouldn't be surprised, because this is how God has operated since the beginning of time. And this is how our own hearts work, too - an incredible combination of grace and sin, strength and brokenness.

So at the end of this year, and every year, it's always best to take stock, reflect, repent, and resolve. The practice of doing an examination of conscience at the end of every year was so beautifully encouraged by Pope Francis during a Vespers homily on December 31, 2014:

Holy Mother Church teaches us to end the year and also our days with an examination of conscience, through which we review what has happened:

we thank the Lord for every good we have received and have been able to do and, at the same time, we think again of our failings and our sins — to be grateful and to ask for forgiveness.

[We ask] ourselves: how do we live? Do we live as children or as slaves?... A great Italian artist said a few days ago that it was easier for the Lord to take the Israelites out of Egypt than Egypt from the heart of the Israelites. Yes, they were liberated materially from slavery, but during the march in the desert with the various difficulties and hunger they began to feel nostalgia for Egypt where they ate onions and garlic (Numbers 11:5); they forgot, however, that they ate them at the table of slavery.

Therefore, we must ask ourselves: are we free or are we slaves, are we salt and light? Are we leaven? Or are we spent, insipid, hostile, discouraged, insignificant, tired? In concluding this year, in giving thanks and in asking for forgiveness, it will do us good to ask for the grace to be able to walk in freedom in order to repair the many damages and to defend ourselves from the nostalgia of slavery.”

Wow, go back and read that again. It was easier for God to part the Red Sea than to get the Israelites to stop complaining in the desert, even while they were being fed the miraculous manna each morning. I’m sure there were times this year that we complained and doubted, when we chose not to love, even when the manna was right in front of us.

Due to our free will, God can only enter our hearts when we allow Him to, which is why his mission was to preach repentance. When we hear the word repentance, what comes to mind? I think of the Old Testament with sackcloth and ashes, penance and fasting. But it’s so much deeper than that. The Greek word for repentance used in the New Testament is metanoia - which means an intentional change of mind or conversion of heart. Metanoia can be seen as a positive instead of a negative - leaving



behind an old way of thinking or believing and being led to something greater.

Every Ash Wednesday, we hear God speaking through the prophet Joel, calling the Israelites to *"rend your hearts, not your garments"* in their fasting and repentance. If we only do the outward motions without a deeper conversion of heart, we will keep falling into the same sins over and over again. It is through true repentance that God can then "give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you." (Ezekiel 36:26)

Some of the Apostles in the Gospel experienced metanoia in a single instant - one of those *"drop everything and follow Him"* moments. While some of us may have had those moments as well, for most of us it's more of a gradual process. And we're still never finished. Metanoia is a constant, lifelong process, a way of life.

As we reflect on this past year, in our victories and failings, let us look at it through the lense of metanoia. Let us ask for forgiveness, and look to make reparation for our sins. The best way we can do this is by going to Confession, the fount of mercy. We can also pray prayers of reparation, for our own sinfulness or for the world's. And let us ask to be made new.

-Emily

Reflect: Reflect on this past year, using Pope Francis' words as a guide - "[Did] we live as children or as slaves? [Did] we live as baptized persons in Christ, anointed by the Spirit, rescued and free? Or [did] we live according to the world?"

Act: If you feel you need to, go to confession and ask for forgiveness. Then, more importantly, allow His mercy to wash over you and seep into your soul, asking for a clean heart as we start the new year. Make an act





## Matthew 7:7-11

As I think about this past year there are so many moments where the Lord answered my prayers amidst the sorrows and joys of everyday life. I have heard countless times that there are three different ways the Lord answers our prayers. Sometimes He says “yes”, sometimes He says “not yet”, and other times He says “I have something better in store for you”. I am continually surprised and humbled by the fact that the Lord answers the prayers of someone as lowly and wretched as I am. It seems so unbelievable! Why in the world would the Lord take the time to answer my prayers? There is actually one simple answer to this question: love. The Lord loves us so much that He answers our prayers in ways that we could never imagine. My goal for this study is to walk you through a reflection in your intentions for this New Year.

In Matthew 7:7-11 Jesus says, *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”* I love hearing this bible verse because I instantly start to think about all of the things I should be praying for and how much the Lord can be helping me in my day to day studies, but little did I know

that there is a completely different meaning to this well known verse. In this verse the Lord is asking us to ask for the greatest of our hearts' desire. This desire isn't our future spouse or a new career, but an authentic and personal relationship with our Lord.

Anytime we ask for a deeper relationship with our Lord He always answers our prayers. The Lord wants us to pray for things such as more patience, a higher ability to love, and a deeper relationship with Him. When we pray for things such as this we will never be disappointed.

I am definitely not saying that we shouldn't pray for our loved ones and other intentions, though. We should always pray for those in our lives all others who ask for our prayers. In those situations we should take after Saint Monica who never ceased praying for the conversion of her son, Saint Augustine. Saint Monica prayed day in and day out for her son and we all know how that turned out.

The Lord answered her prayers and her son became one of the greatest saints and doctors of the church. This is what I am saying, while we need to spend this year praying for all of the special intentions we hold in our hearts, we should also ask the Lord for a deeper relationship with Him.





Recently I attended daily Mass at the Catholic school I work at and had a nice chat with the priest afterwards. We were talking about Christmas approaching and the topic led to family life and motherhood, which ultimately led to Mary. I told him that the strength that Mary had at the cross, to watch her son die for us is something that I can honestly say I would struggle with. No mother can imagine losing a child, let alone witness their death in such a brutal and inhumane way. How did she go on? How did she live the rest of her days with that kind of pain? I stated I would never be able to do that, I could never bear that pain. He answered with "The grace of God would give you the strength needed." I smiled and said "*Mary is a saint, the most divine woman who ever lived, there are a lot of differences between her and I.*" To which he responded, "*All the saints were as human as you.*"

A new year brings a new sense of motivation. I mean it's another chance to do right, grow, change, learn a new hobby, take up a new skill, it's a chance to be the person we always wanted to be. Each year I try to spend December 31<sup>st</sup> in reflection. I try to think of the times during that year that I have struggled the most, learned the most or enjoyed the most. I think of those who have supported me during that year and make it a point to tell them thank you. I mentally make a few "resolutions" and then spend the first few days of the new year working towards them until they eventually fall out of sight and out of mind.

I tend to set myself up for failure each year by choosing resolutions that conform to what society thinks I should be changing, but never take into consideration what Christ is asking me to accomplish each year; sainthood. Now believe me, no one is more terrified at the idea that we are all called to be saints than me. I mean talk about pressure! I'm a normal person. I sin, I become discouraged, I doubt, I have anxieties and things that I know I need to change, there is no way that God wants me as one of his saints. How can I rank among the "chosen" ones?

It's easy really. God's love for us is enough. It's enough to swallow up that doubt. It's enough to make a humble sinner into a mighty saint. It's enough to purify our hearts, strength our minds and mold us into the faithful follower that we are called to be. Through his love, we can all achieve sainthood. And how do we know this? Because every single one of us is called to sainthood. Not just the holiest, the most devout or the "best Catholic you know." Nope, He called all of us.

*"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will."* [Romans 12:2](#)

All the saints were human. They struggled, they felt pain, anguish, had sorrows and difficulties, but they all were set apart by their love of Christ, their obedience and their trust. We focus so much attention on things this world tells us we need: more successful job with more money, a bigger house, nicer cars- yet all of that pales in comparison to what we are truly called to be, and that is followers of Christ.

This year my resolution is simple. I will remove a major roadblock from my path to sainthood; myself. I will remove my insecurities, my doubt and replace it with trust. Trust that I am strong enough to do God's will. I will listen to the scripture, the promises and the words that God has given us. Instead of telling myself that each saint contained some sort of superhuman strength and ability, I will instead remind myself that they were human, just like myself. I will stop telling myself it's impossible and instead ask God what He wants from my life. The saints remain our constant reminder of what happens when we put God first and ourselves second, and I believe that each and every one of you has that in you- make today another step towards your sainthood! -Dana

Reflect: What do you typically make as a resolution in the New Year? What can you do to change that to something that brings you closer to God?







## Little Boy Released April 24, 2015

directed by *Alejandro Monteverde*

Mustard Seed-[Matthew 17:20](#)

Childlike faith-[Mark 10:15](#)

No Spoilers! I promise :)

I would argue, for starters, Little Boy is definitely a family-friendly movie. However, it is suitable for anyone, as my husband and I watched part together. There aren't many films made today that please us (especially only adults) with entertainment and morality. The town of O'Hare, California, in Little Boy, delivered, albeit through the eyes of an 8 year old named Pepper. Little Boy comes with church sacraments, love, family,

war history, friends and foes all packaged together in an under 2 hour film (on Netflix to boot).

Pepper finds out quite quickly the Corporal Works of Mercy will get his father, James, back from fighting in the Philippines during World War II.

The Corporal Works of Mercy are:

*Feed the hungry*

*Shelter the homeless*

*Visit those in prison*

*Clothe the naked*

*Visit the sick*

*Bury the dead*

*and...*

*Be friends with the Japanese man\**...or at least that is what Father informed him, between mass and spiritual direction. As we know it, if we believe, God will answer...if it is in God's will. According to scripture, we need only a mustard-seed size of faith to be granted the kingdom of God, which Pepper took to heart. Pepper didn't understand why God wouldn't want his family together, therefore it must be part of His will. Viewers, Pepper's priest and his Mary-like mother, all know God's will tends to be much more than our human minds can process. Pepper innocently takes us on a journey through O'Hare, practicing the Corporal Works of Mercy in his community, most importantly befriending a local Japanese man recently released from an internment camp, all in the name of his father.

While watching, I experienced the emotions of joy, sadness, doubt, and confusion, but ultimately love for the Church for inspiring such a sweet





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