

09-262EA

Opinion column

December 18, 2009

A new year comes, the old one slips away

By Mar Muñoz-Visoso

An old Spanish Christmas carol sings thus: “*El año nuevo se viene, tururú, el año viejo se va, y nosotros nos iremos y no volveremos más.*” (A new year is approaching, the old one is going away, and we too will depart never to return again). The first part tells us of the traditional year-end rituals of saying goodbye to the old year and welcoming the new one with cheer, while the second one reminds us that life goes by in the blink of an eye and we had better live it to the fullest because we do not know when our time will be up.

And so, while we balance what the old year has left behind in our individual and collective memories, we also look to the future with confidence in God and our feet on the ground.

My list of impressions of 2009 includes the inauguration of the first president of color in the United States, the appointment of Judge Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court of Justice and of a Latino theologian, Miguel Díaz, as U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See. Also, the unending and at times difficult debate on health care reform which, as I write these letters, continues unresolved in the Senate.

The Year 2009 also brought us high unemployment not seen in the U.S. in decades, and the lament of those who lost their houses because of unsustainable mortgages and medical bills that put them into bankruptcy. The ones who got us in this hole needed our help to get all of us out of it, and, ironically, it was necessary to save them first.

As every end of year, our homes and work spaces fill up with the buzzing of incessant activity as we resolve pending issues, and seek to get done in a few days what we did not accomplish in the whole year.

And in the midst of all this, once again, a little child brings us hope and invites us to look at the future with confidence, acknowledging that the most important gift is life itself. He invites us to contemplate the mystery of life and to welcome it like Mary and Joseph did: with amazement and without fear, procuring the best for the stranger just entrusted to them even with the scarce means of two pilgrims, forced immigrants victim of the policies of their time, whose temporary home is a stable. The only thing they had to offer was themselves.

I invite all of us to welcome the New Year with Mary and Joseph’s attitude. May we never cease to be amazed at life; may we never stop striving to do the right thing. May we value family and friends above all else and may with be blessed with many of them.

The year 2010 will bring its own worries and adventures, times in which the wind blows on our sails and times in which we will have to row against the current. We can already hear winds of

immigration reform; others are making a plea for the Church and the Catholic schools to dramatically increase the enrollment of Latino children in their classrooms over the next decade (<http://catholicschooladvantage.nd.edu>); and a national Convocation on Cultural Diversity will convene Church leadership at the University of Notre Dame in May to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Encuentro 2000 (I can't believe it's been ten years already!), and to continue the dialogue initiated there, reflecting on what it means to be "Catholic" in a culturally diverse Church and finding ways to continue building unity in diversity. And with God's help we say, bring it on! *¡Estamos listos!*

The old year is gone, the new one is here. Health (and a nearby doctor you can afford), work (much much work, especially for the unemployed), peace and many blessings to all in 2010.

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