

**“New Year’s 2006”**  
Homily of January 1, 2006  
by Fr. Brian Joyce

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I am going to ask for a show of hands. How many here usually come to the seven o’ clock Mass? And how many usually come to the eight? Now, what I want you to do toward the end of Mass is wish each other a Happy New Year and say, “I’ll see you again, maybe next year.” or quite possibly not for another eleven years because it’s only every eleven years that the days of Christmas and New Year’s fall on a Sunday.

I’ve made my New Year’s Resolution. It is to make sure that the priests don’t preach too long. So we have this clock up here, and you just keep an eye on it. When you think it’s late enough, you raise your hand or throw a missalette or.... (Lots of laughter!) ...Only five hands up so far! I’m doing pretty well.

I want to share with you a New Year’s Day parable. On the first day, God created the cow. God said, “You must go to the field with the farmer all day long and suffer under the sun, have calves and give milk to support the farmer. And I will give you a life span of sixty years.” The cow said, “That’s kind of a tough life you want me to live for sixty years. Let me have twenty years. I’ll give back the other forty.” And God agreed.

On the second day, God created the dog. God said, “Sit all day by the door of your house and bark at anyone who comes in or walks past. I will give you a life span of twenty years.” The dog said, “That’s too long to be barking. Give me ten years. I’ll give back the other ten.” So God, with a sigh, agreed.

On the third day, God created the monkey. God said, “Entertain people. Do monkey tricks. Make them laugh. I’ll give you a twenty year life span.” The monkey said, “How boring! Monkey tricks for twenty years. I don’t think so. Dog gave you back ten. So that’s what I’ll do too. OK?” And God agreed again.

On the fourth day, God created man. God said, “Eat. Sleep. Play, and enjoy life. Do nothing. Just enjoy. I’ll give you twenty years.” Man said, “What? Only twenty years? No way, man! Tell you what? I’ll take my twenty and the forty cow gave back and the ten the dog gave back and the ten the monkey gave back. That makes eighty. OK?” “OK,” said God. “You’ve got a deal.”

So that’s why for the first twenty years we eat, sleep, play, enjoy life and do nothing. For the next forty, we slave in the sun to support a family. For the next ten years, we do monkey tricks

to entertain our grandchildren, and for the last ten years, we sit in front of the house and bark at everyone.

Now, I'm not sure what stage you are at. You might be out of sync a little, but the one thing we know and we notice when we celebrate New Year's is that time flies. But time doesn't always fly. It also captures us and it drives us. And personally, I want to blame the clock. How many are wearing watches or have clocks with you? How many have wound one in the last week? ... We don't wind our clocks anymore. They wind us. One historian has said that the most significant invention of all time is the mechanical clock. You know, we had from early on, sand clocks and water clocks and candle clocks and sundials. But then what was added about five or six hundred years ago was the mechanical clock which added twenty-four hours to the day. It added the night to our clocks. Not too long ago, most people didn't have watches or clocks and they never read a clock. They heard it. That's why you had these big clocks in the town square where people could hear the hour sounded and know what hour it was. But five hundred years ago, there were no minutes and no seconds on the clocks. Jesus said, "Night comes when no one can work." Well, tell me about it!

We now have twenty-four hour days with all the hours and the seconds and the minutes added. We are able to shop 'til we drop. We are able to work morning shifts, night shifts, midnight shifts and everything stays open. Americans tend to work more hours per week than any other nation in the world and shop more hours than anyone else in the world. Compared to our counterparts in Europe and Britain and Sweden, we take less time off. The average for Americans is two weeks vacation a year. For those countries, it is six weeks a year. And, not surprisingly (It may have changed a little, but not much.) ten years ago, the best selling items in our drug stores were three things: Valium for stress and Inderol for high blood pressure and Tagamet for ulcers. And, it's because we never have enough time. One cynic has written this poem:

This is the age of the half-read page  
The quick hash and the mad dash.  
This is the age of the bright night  
And the nerves tight  
And the plane with a brief stop.  
This is the age of the lamp tan  
In a short span,  
The brain strain and the heart pain  
The cat naps til the spring snaps  
And the front is all done.

Well, I wish you something else for New Year's. First of all, I wish all of us and all of you, safety. The world is not entirely a safe place anymore. I wish and pray for us safety from terrorism, safety from disaster. I particularly wish safety to those who travel. I've got an own personal agenda. You know, this year Father Aidan, our associate, is taking a group, whoever

wants to go, to Italy and Rome in the spring and Sister Joanne Gallagher, who is our associate pastor, is taking a group to Ireland in the summer. They are both terrific gifts to our parish. So I am hoping they travel safely, but most of all come back to work. So I wish safety to all of us.

The other thing that I wish all of us is to set some time aside, to set some time aside, not just time to rush, time to run, time to get what we can and time during which we miss what matters. I pray that our calendars and our clocks not drive us..... but remind us that time is a limited and precious resource for all of us. And so I pray that we give time for ourselves, time for leisure, for rest and for fun. I put that first. I pray that we give time to our loved ones. I heard recently of a busy young professional woman, an attorney, who got a phone call from her father who lives five hundred miles away. He asked when she was coming to see him, and she immediately began to recite how heavy her work load was, her court dates and trial preparations. Her dad interrupted her to ask, "You know, I've been wondering and really want to ask you, when I die are you going to come to my funeral?" The daughter reacted, "Dad! What an awful thing to say! Of course I'll be at your funeral!" Her dad said, "Good! Let's make a deal. Forget the funeral. Let's spend some time together when I can be with you." .... May we set aside some time for our loved ones. And, finally, I pray that we set some quality time aside to listen for God in our lives and to give thanks.

And now I invite you to stand together and, if you have those watches, that you hold them up or if you have an appointment book.... I have calendars here that represent the year ahead, a clock and an appointment book, as we pray in blessing...

Lord, you who live outside of time and reside in the imperishable moment we ask your blessing on this New Year's Day and upon your gift of time. Bless our clocks and watches, you who kindly direct us to observe the passing of minutes and hours, may they make us aware of the miracle of each second of life we experience. May these our ticking servants help us not to miss that which is important while you keep us from machine-like routine. May we ever be free from being clock-watchers and instead become time-lovers. Bless our calendars, these ordered lists of days, weeks and months, of holidays, holy days, fasts and feasts, all our special days of remembering. May these servants, our calendars, once reserved for the royal few, for magi and pyramid priests, now grace our homes and our lives. May them remind us of birthdays and other gift days as they teach us the secret that all life is meant for celebration and contemplation. Bless, Lord, this new year, each of its three hundred and sixty-five days and nights. Bless us with full moons and new moons. Bless us with happy seasons and a long life. Grant to us Lord, the new year's gift, a year of love. We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.