



“May the dear God, who helped so well this year, be our help and strength in the coming year also; we confidently hope and pray for this. “

Blessed Theresa of Jesus, foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame – Letter #2688

## Leave Room for the Holy Spirit

When I sat down earlier this month to think about my New Year’s resolutions, I wrote three columns: Mind, Body, and Spirit. As I was contemplating my Spirit column, I kept remembering Pope Francis’s frequent admonitions to leave room for the Holy Spirit. While I did want to include this in my list of resolutions, I struggled with how to fit this concept into the column. I’m accustomed to listing specific, concrete, and quantifiable actions like, “I will pray the [Examen](#) every night,” or, “I will help at the food pantry twice each month.” I just couldn’t nail down the specifics of, “I will leave room for the Holy Spirit.” How would one quantify this? What are the steps one would take to accomplish this? *How could I fit the Holy Spirit into the box?* Fortunately, [Pope Francis has shared his wisdom](#) about this very dilemma:

*Newness always makes us a bit fearful, because we feel more secure if we have everything under control, if we are the ones who build, program, and plan our lives in accordance with our own ideas, our own comfort, our own preferences. This is also the case when it comes to God. Often we follow him, we accept him, but only up to a certain point. It is hard to abandon ourselves to him with complete trust, allowing the Holy Spirit to be the soul and guide of our lives in our every decision...The newness which God brings into our life is something that actually brings fulfillment, that gives true joy, true serenity, because God loves us and desires only our good. Let us ask ourselves today: Are we open to “God’s surprises”?  
Or are we closed and fearful before the newness of the Holy Spirit?*

Pope Francis makes me want to tweak my list. Who can say no to fulfillment, true joy, true serenity, and “God’s surprises”?



If we are going to leave room for the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, it’s not just about listing quantifiable actions. The spiritual life is a relationship between God and us—God loving us, God calling us, and God waiting for us to respond to God’s invitation. When we leave room for the Holy Spirit, we say yes to being an active listener to God’s whispers in our heart. We say yes to seeing with the eyes of the heart as we witness God’s love displayed for us throughout the day in countless small ways. We say yes to the grace of the Spirit that allows that complete surrender of which St. Ignatius speaks in the [Suscipe](#) and the [First Principle and Foundation](#). And we say yes to responsiveness, openness, and flexibility to the unpredictable stirrings of the Spirit—the Spirit which brings surprises that are greater than we could ever plan or imagine. The Holy Spirit just doesn’t fit in a box.

Fr. Alfred Delp, a German Jesuit martyr of the Holocaust, learned to abandon himself fully to the Spirit during his last months in a Gestapo prison. In his last writings, Delp called upon the Holy Spirit to fix a world seemingly beyond repair and advised

his parishioners that: “Man facing the Ultimate, must be someone in a state of being shaken, with an alert, awakened heart that does not freeze up, does not become weary, or cramped, or deadened, but sees things as they are.” (*Advent of the Heart*, 92)

This year, I have resolved to pray for the grace to be the kind of person of whom Fr. Delp speaks—a person “in a state of being shaken, with an alert, awakened heart that does not freeze up.” And I think it’s a good year to welcome that fulfillment, true joy, and true serenity, and [God’s surprises](#) of which Pope Francis speaks. I want the kind of heart that is responsive to the whispers of the Spirit, a “Yes-Lord-I-am-listening” kind of heart. And, for that kind of heart, I need to leave room for the Holy Spirit.

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## Looking Ahead

Discernment Retreat  
January 24-26, 2020  
Nazareth Retreat Center  
Grand Prairie, TX

Vocation Presentation  
Jan. 28, 2020  
St. Paul Catholic School  
St. Paul, MO

[Twin Cities Nuns and Nones](#)  
February 5, 2020  
Place TBD: Minneapolis, MN

Vocation Presentations  
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton  
February 16 and 19, 2020  
Plano, TX

Vocation Presentations  
February 24-25, 2020  
Fresno, CA

Busy Person’s Retreat  
March 1-5, 2020  
Notre Dame of Maryland  
Baltimore, MD

Catholic Sisters Week  
March 8-14, 2020  
<https://catholicsistersweek.org/>

Vocations Jamboree  
<https://www.umary.edu/events/vocations-jamboree.php>  
March 17-19, 2020  
University of Mary  
Bismarck, ND

## Did you know?

Each of our Vocation Reflections is available on-line at our website:  
<https://ssnd.org/become-sister/vocation-resources/>

This month’s resource: <https://nationalcatholicsistersproject.org/Curriculum>

This is a great resource for teachers and catechists – and anyone wishing to learn more about the lives of sisters.