Welcome to the brave new world of twenty-twenty-four! Life is slowly returning to normal after the pandemic, we have a fairly early Easter (March 31st) and a presidential election this year. Whether or not we’re looking forward to these events, they’ll come whether we like it or not. How can we be spiritually ready?

Nothing can completely prepare us for what is to come, and life would be rather boring if we could. Nevertheless, there are some obvious ways we can be prayerfully ready for what this new year presents:

Maintain contact with your community. If you come to church and remain mentally and spiritually in your own space, you’ll be missing the primary way God communicates with us. *The Church is worthy of its name when we worship together.* Beyond this, knowing other people and relying on them will help us confront the challenges life presents and enhance our appreciation of its joys.

Embrace surprises. In the Gospel, Jesus tells the story of a groom who invited guests to a wedding but nobody would come. Rather than cancelling his plans, he went out into the bad part of town and invited everybody. The poor and rejected had no plans anyway, and so they celebrated with him. How often do we refuse an invitation only because it would shake us out of our routine? Sometimes there is a legitimate reason, but many times we miss wonderful opportunities because we’re too lethargic to seize the moment.

Have a sense of humor. As far as we know, human beings are the only species that truly laughs. Beyond allowing us to cope with uncomfortable or even impossible situations, *humor helps us to see the irony in life and deal with it creatively.* Too often we believe that Church should be “serious” and neglect to be amused at ourselves caught in the act of being human. I suspect God laughs a lot more than we do.

May God’s blessings be on you and all your endeavors in the coming year.

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**Notes from Fr. Nick**

**Happy New Year!**

Date: February 14, 2024
Time: 9:30 am—2:00 pm
Location: Mission San José Dominican Motherhouse Wellness Room
Cost: $40 (includes lunch)
RSVP by February 12, 2024

[tinyurl.com/CES-AshWednesday](http://tinyurl.com/CES-AshWednesday)