The End Is Near

Repent! The End Is Near! America and Europe will be plunged into darkness by a solar eclipse on August 21 – and then the world will end.

At least that’s the view of a group of fundamentalist Christians as posted on their website *Unsealed*. They cite the Book of Revelation as their main source of proof of their theory. But, the doomsayers do hint at some uncertainty in their predictions as they’ve also said that scripture warns that ‘no one knows’ the hour of the apocalypse. Are there any other events or dates we should consider? Let’s look to our recent past – December 25 and January 1?

In ancient Rome, the Winter Solstice was thought to occur on December 25. Some scholars argue that the very same day dedicated to the Roman god Sol Invictus was later adopted by Christianity as the day of the Nativity of Jesus Christ. Definitely a good omen for us, though not so favorable for Rome.

January 1 was the New Year’s Day, a day consecrated to Janus – a deity whose head had two faces – one looking forward and the other looking back. He had an augural character, as the Romans believed the beginning of anything was an omen for the whole. Thus on that day it was customary to exchange cheerful words of good wishes for new plans and endeavors.

In the spirit of Janus, we have the custom of looking back on the prior year, forward to the next, and planning accordingly. For many of us this has devolved into a variation of the “Diet-And-Exercise” talk. In my case, the “Diet times Exercise” equation has been constant. I have gained and lost the same 10 pounds...
many times over the past 20 years. As a result, several years ago I decided that I would no longer make New Year’s Resolutions. I now make New Year’s Solutions.

At this point, I’d like to suggest a few spiritual solutions that each of us could easily adopt for this next year, as opposed to the resolutions that we’d probably abandon before the NFL Playoffs.

* Subscribe to a Daily Reflection, emailed to your InBox. I use the Word Among Us (wau.org). Other popular sources include: Robert Baron, Thomas Keating, Henri Nouwen, Richard Rohr, and Ronald Rolheiser. Of course, you can easily find many others on Google. Just let your fingers do the walking.

* Download the Laudete app to your Android, iPad or iPhone. In addition to the daily scripture readings, it offers audio reflections, the complete Bible, and many other links.

* The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops also has daily readings, reflections, news and many other resources (usccb.org).

* Do I need to mention Deacon Peter’s Website (DcnPeter.com)?

* Visit the Prayer Chapel just once each month. The Blessed Sacrament is exposed every Thursday. Bring your Rosary. You’d be surprised what an hour of prayer and meditation does.

* Go to just one more Mass each month than you do now.

* Go to Reconciliation just once more each year than you do now.

Hopefully, these few simple suggestions will spur your spirit into action. In closing, I would like to mention the number one benefit of choosing solutions over resolutions. You won’t have to feel guilty about beer, pizza or hot fudge sundaes. … at least not until Lent.