

**32963 article for 12-28-10**

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## ***Looking Up***

What do you know about the ancient Roman god, Janus? If you recall a two-faced figure, you're on the right track. The legendary Janus had a single head with two faces, one on both the front and rear, which allowed him to look in two directions simultaneously – both forward and backward. Not a bad trick! Because of his unique two-directional physiognomy, Janus became the god associated with passageways connecting one place or state to another: gates, doors, bridges, and channels. Janus was also the god invoked at times of life transition such as harvests and plantings, marriages, births and deaths.

The month of January is named for Janus because it, too, is a time of passage and transition. Every January we stand at the threshold between what was and what will be. As we look back and say good-bye to the old year, we can't help but peer forward to discern what may lie ahead in the new.

The soul-searching that occurs for many of us every January first is fitting. Looking back, we reflect upon what the old year held. We recall the good and the bad, and consider what we've lost and gained. And then we typically turn our attention decisively toward the future, and make resolutions to amend the failings of the past, or restore hopes that faltered, or improve some aspect of life for ourselves or for others.

Are you going to make some New Year's resolutions? How will you assess what needs changing? We think Rev. Walter Schoedel has a good suggestion to help us make this time of assessment and direction-setting fruitful. He suggests that rather than spending too much time looking backward or forward, we might start looking upward. He calls his suggested seven resolutions for upward looking his 7-Ups (and no, these are not related in any way to the delicious beverage that also bears this name.)

Schoedel's 7-Ups are: Look-Up – acknowledge your relationship to God and rejoice in it. Wake-Up – begin every day fully alert to the richness of life and what you have been called to be and do. Dress Up – put a smile on your face and let it speak for an inner attitude of joy and contentment. Shut-Up – listen more and talk less, and let your speech reflect your best nature not your worst. Stand-Up – be willing to take a stand for things that matter. Reach-Up – spend time in prayers of thanksgiving, confession, supplication, and praise. And finally, Lift-Up – actively look for ways you can help others through service or support, or simple sharing.

The end of this year is fast approaching and a whole new year with 365 days of possibility lies before us. We hope you'll join us in crossing the threshold from one to the next thoughtfully. Let's look back with some honest self-assessment, forward with anticipation, and most importantly, let's look up – with hope. Happy New Year!