

Homily for the Solemnity of Mary
St. Joseph's Neier
Rev. Kevin Schmittgens

December 31, 2013 – January 1, 2014

Central Idea: Are we spiraling up or are we spiraling down?

*So you are no longer a slave but a son,
and if a son then also an heir, through God.*

Let's talk about the geometry of life.

At 1:53 am on December 30th of this year, Hilda Rene Brueggemann was born. There is a sweet balance here because her namesake, Hilda Voss passed away this year in January. We don't have to be without a "Hilda" in the new year.

When Hilda's grandmother (a strange sounding turn of phrase, if I ever heard it) told me about her birth, I smiled and commented that it was the circle of life, and it also occurred to me that this might be a good way to discuss the beginning of the New Year.

Is life a circle or a straight line?

There is a perfection about a circle, it is complete. I like how our parish year began and ended with Hilda's. There is something beautiful and exquisite about it. This is the way that we mark the seasons, this is the way we follow the year. But life as a circle can also be suffocating, can also be frustrating, we are just running around in circles. There is something pleasing about a circle, yet there is something stifling and repressive about it as well. We never seem to get anywhere.

That is why some people prefer the idea of a line, we are moving forward, we are getting somewhere, we have a goal, there is progress. There is also something scary about it. A new year is uncharted territory, the undiscovered country. There are no road map, so guidelines, no play book to follow.

May I suggest a third way, a spiral. We have the comfort and reassurance of the circle, with the progress and direction a line.

The question I have for you at the turning of the year, one that you would do well to look at honestly and deliberately: are you spiraling up or are you spiraling down? If up, what are you planning to do to keep going the way that you are, because without reflecting on it, we stop, we fade, we perish. If you feel you are spiraling down, do you feel you can turn it around, stop the tail spin that is your life and move in a new direction.

Unlike a lot of people, I think this is a good time to make some resolutions about your life. If not now, then when. The trouble is how do you keep them, three quick suggestions.

Make your resolution hard, but doable. Challenge yourself, but don't overdo it. I have been consistently working out over the past four years. I have become healthier and happier. I want to take it to the next level, so I am challenging myself even harder in the New Year. But I won't be running a marathon.

Tell someone about your resolution. Most resolutions are abysmal failures because we do not share them with others who will call us into account. Let your spouse, or your parent, or a child or a friend help you to continue on in your upward spiral. A little help goes a long way.

Spend some time each day in quiet and solitude. In other words, pray. Without some contemplation in our lives, without stopping each day and reevaluating our spirals we can get lost and forget. This is easier said than done, I know, especially for your parents, that is why you absolutely, 100%, need to burn it into your schedule. I do it driving to school. I turn off the radio and just think. I keep my eyes on the road.

I cannot wait to see Hilda Rene and more importantly, I would like to tell her about her great grandmother and what she meant to our parish, to her family and to me. I hope her life spiral take her high.