

THE STARTING LINE INVITES US TO THROW OPEN OUR HEARTS AND BELIEVE

We live in a society that bombards us with the message that more and faster is better and when it is broken, toss it to the curb and buy a new one. Ads pop up everywhere vying for our attention about a product or thing that is to complete us and fill us with joy, unspeakable joy. We are, at times, a throwaway society or a trade-it-in-for-the-latest-model community. At times we have to make critical decisions when something is in need of repair. Should we invest in the repair or is it easier to replace it? Many times we replace it and buy a new one. We rationalize the decision by saying it is just easier that way. This is amplified at this time of the year when we retrieve the artificial tree from storage. There is always a question as to whether it will light or not. And at times when it doesn't, we wonder if we should look for a new one or take the time to fix it.

This year it happened to me. I pulled the Christmas tree out of the box, successfully lit the bottom section, and plugged in the second section. At first, there was no light. Then after shaking a few branches, all the lights came on. I was thrilled. I added this section and continued with the process. After I pulled out the ladder to put on the ornaments at the top of the tree, I noticed a few bulbs out in that center section. There was a darkened area. I went to the Ziploc bag that contained the replacement bulbs and replaced a few. All the lights went out and then they all went back on. After this, I noticed another bulb out and then another. I was concerned that the tree would not look good or right. So I went online to look at new Christmas trees for sale at Target. As I was looking at inventory and stock for the replacement, I received an emergency call to go do an anointing. As I was driving, in my mind I kept going back to the tree. What should I do? Was I really ready to buy a new one? Should I just add another string of lights and get it through another year?

When I got back home, I returned to the tree to give it another try. It had been a good tree for so many years. I replaced a few more bulbs and was thrilled to give it another chance to shine and bring peace to the room upstairs. God is not a throwaway God. God never gives up on us. God is never looking to replace us despite what society says is true.

Overwhelming happiness comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit. Mary moves in haste and when Elizabeth welcomes her, she is filled with the Holy Spirit and in that fullness she proclaims a joy that encompasses her whole being including the child inside her womb, who is John the Baptist. This uplifting comes from a belief that what was promised is real and will be fulfilled. Elizabeth had to be open and had to be welcoming. The greatest joy is that we are not disposable, we are not replaceable; we are loved. This promise is real. This Savior will proclaim it with His life. No darkness, no unlit parts of our lives, no areas of darkness can overcome the promise and fulfillment of God. Elizabeth allows herself to be filled with the Holy Spirit. She allows herself to be overcome with the reality of God's goodness when trust and belief are welcomed into our homes and our hearts.

This week the starting line begins with opening our hearts and trusting we will never be thrown away or replaced.



Fr. John