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2010: In with the New

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NCR Today

Yesterday, we looked back and examined the things we want less of in the new year and new decade. Today, let's look forward and think of things we want more of in the coming years.

First, I want more pro-life Democrats and Republicans who are conscious of social justice issues. Those members of Congress like Democrat Bob Casey and Bart Stupak and Republican Anh Cao of Louisiana, the only Republican who voted for the bill in either chamber, find themselves at odds with the leadership of their political party. But, neither party is a perfect fit for the Catholic social justice tradition: The Dems have this huge gaping blind spot on abortion and the GOP is too busy trying to capitalism to notice its many inequities and indignities. Casey, Stupak and Cao are among those who actually embody the fullness of the tradition.

Second, I hope there are more jobs created. I don't care about the GDP or the stock market, except and only insofar as these indicators suggest that life for the average American is going to improve. The loss of a job can crush a family, especially because of the loss of health care benefits that job-loss entails. I hope businesspeople will think about hiring a worker first and increasing profit margins and dividends later. I hope that by the end of the year, everyone who wants a job can find one.

Third, I hope American culture discovers more room for mercy. In his book, *The Difference God Makes*, Cardinal Francis George says that among the differences between a Catholic and an American worldview is this. For a Catholic, many things are not permitted but everything can be forgiven. In America, everything is permitted but there is very little forgiveness. It is a very incisive comment. Instead of just seeing Catholics in front of the cameras to discuss abortion, I would like to see a Catholic bishop discuss the way our culture trashes people who make mistakes and arguing that it is very unchristian.

Fourth, I would like to see more victories by the UConn men's basketball team. Go Huskies! (The UConn

Women's team apparently is incapable of losing so they do not need my hope.)

Fifth, I would like to see more bishops and priests read and imitate the sermons of Pope Benedict XVI. The most recurrent theme, no matter the actual topic, is that the Church must present the Gospel as a great "Yes!" to life and to beauty and to love, and stop being seen as the dispenser of a series of "No's." I would like to see the American Church less defensive against the culture, seized more with the spirit of the humanist Pope Paul III than spirit of the puritanical Pope Paul IV. Pope Benedict XVI's writings are brimming with hope, and it would be nice to see the American Church's leaders stop their scolding long enough to listen to their boss.

That's my list. What is yours?

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