

From Fr. Fleming's Desk

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Many of us have, by now, both made and broken our New Year's resolutions. Not to worry! The true test of such pledges is not 100% fidelity but rather the willingness to pick up the pieces and begin again when we fail in our well-intentioned pledges. We need to be careful lest perfection become the enemy of the good. Many of us fail because we make such sweeping promises, for example: "In 2018, I'm not going to A, B or C any more!" Most of us would do better by promising, "On January 1, I'm not going to X, Y or Z for the whole day." Twenty-four hours is a doable pledge, easily renewed on January 2 for another day. "One day at a time," is more than a slogan - it can be a way of life.

While we're on the topic of New Year's resolutions, let me suggest a half dozen possibilities to enhance our parish life and our personal spiritual lives. Join me in "trying these on for size" to see which ones fit.

1) In this first month of the year I resolve to share with someone who seldom or never comes to church the reasons why I go to church - and to invite that person to come with me. Success here will be in your sharing your own experience and inviting someone to join us for prayer (that's our job) while the ultimate goal of the person's accepting the invitation will be the work of grace (that's God's job). NOTE: this January resolution is renewable on a monthly basis - one month at a time!

2) Before this day is done (on whatever day I happen to read this letter), I resolve to find a quiet time and place to sit with the Lord in prayer - for 5 minutes: thanking him for the day's benefits and asking for his help with whatever were this day's burdens. IMPORTANT: pledge no more than 5 minutes, not 15 minutes, not a half hour or even more. If your quiet time extends beyond your pledged 5 minutes, that's fine - but set the bar low to be sure to accomplish what you pledge for this day. NOTE: this day's pledge is renewable on a daily basis - but only one day at a time!

3) The next time I come to Mass I resolve to leave home early enough to arrive on time lest I miss the message in the scripture readings and my late entrance distract others trying to listen and pray. Being on time for Mass will make a better experience for you and for everyone else in the church: a win/win situation! **Resolution for your pastor: I pledge to start Mass on time when, at 5:00, 8:30 or 10:30, there's not a steady flow of late arrivers coming in the doors!** (Another win/win situation!) NOTE: this pledge is renewable on a weekly basis, one week at a time, until the pledge becomes a regular habit.

4) The next time I reach into my pocket to support the parish, I resolve to review my regular offering and then contribute (for that one time) whatever is truly my fair and sacrificial share. IMPORTANT: do this *once*, the next time you're about to contribute. Of course this, too, is a renewable resolution: doing it the first time may be instructive for determining one's responsibility to support our parish and its work.

5) The next time I read the parish bulletin, I resolve to read it with an eye to finding a new way to involve myself in parish life. IMPORTANT: if what's offered doesn't seem helpful or if my personal schedule doesn't permit my participation, this resolution is *transferrable* to the next time you read the bulletin. Also renewable, one bulletin at a time.

6) This letter is being distributed on the weekend of January 7. Ash Wednesday is on February 14. Easter this year comes on April 1. That means we're about 5 weeks away from the penitential season of Lent and three months away from Easter and thus: **I resolve, between now and Easter, to take an inventory of my life and, in the sacrament of reconciliation, to confess my faults and failings, seeking the mercy and pardon of God.** NOTE: Confessions are heard every Saturday from 4:00-4:30 or by appointment (call the parish office) and on the Wednesday nights of Lent (6:30 - 8:00 pm): February 21, 28; March 7, 14, 21, 28. And you guessed it: confessing our need for God's mercy - one sin at a time.

You, of course, can add your own spiritual resolutions to the half dozen I suggest here. Just remember to make your goals modest and grow into them - a day at a time...

Sincerely,
Fr. Fleming