

PASTORAL COUNCIL

Thoughts for Reflection

January 3, 2016

New Year's Resolutions

It's that time again, when the year rolls around afresh, that one of our long-standing traditions comes to mind: the making of New Year's Resolutions.

For much of my life, I rejected the notion of resolving to change my life on a specific day, because I had hoped that I was trying to do that throughout the year. But that's like saying you shouldn't plan a road trip, because when you get in the car, you will be trying to get *some-where* the entire time. If that's the kind of trip you have in mind, it can be fun for a short while, but even an impromptu trip requires some sort of planning, or else you'll stay right where you are.

Over the last few years, my wife and I have been setting down on paper the things we want to change and our goals for the New Year. Then, on the following year, we take the paper out to see how we did. I can assure you that – on my side of the list – the failures make a longer list than the successes. But it is a great thing to see forward motion at all, and it is often motion that would not have happened without taking stock and making some plans.

Because our lives—yours and mine—are really spiritual journeys, it's a good idea to set spiritual goals.

It's fairly easy to identify the negatives in our lives. They include anything that takes us away from God: sensuality, contentiousness, jealousy, wrath, hatred, selfish ambition, envy, misusing any of God's gifts, and opening ourselves to heretical beliefs that water down Christ's word.

On the good side are the things that bring us closer to God: supernatural love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, unity, harmony, submission to spiritual authority, works of mercy, and above all, prayer.

God is always in our lives, even if we don't know it. In fact, there is an element of belief in every atheist. When he does convert, he realizes that God was always present in his life, but he just could not see. In that same way, God is always speaking to us, even when we don't listen. In prayer, we listen. And in prayer, we meet Him.

So let us resolve to go deeper into prayer, to set aside time to open our selves to listen to His voice. Even if we can't hear Him speak, we will still orient ourselves more fully toward God. And we prepare our selves to hear Him when He does speak. A deeper prayer life is top among my resolutions for the New Year, and I invite you along on that same journey.