

Dear Parishioners,

So, how are we doing with our New Year's Resolutions? I know it's mid-January and our resolutions might be long forgotten by now. I have found that a couple of mine had to go on a slight hiatus simply because the holiday eating has been so important and necessary. Of course, everyone knows the holiday eating ends with the Super Bowl (or is it Valentine's day?). At any rate, there is overwhelming evidence to prove I need to start doing something about this weight problem and I am taking some concrete steps to make sure I resolve it.

As we think about our resolutions (that is *if* we think about them) we usually take a good look at our lives and realize some changes have to be made. My motivation for making resolutions is that I want to be a better person than I am right now. Of course, when it comes to self-improvement there is a lot of room for growth, "but it's progress not perfection (this quote comes from the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*)." The one negative aspect about making resolutions based on this motivation is that we might tend to see ourselves as bad people who need to become better people. This can be, unfortunately, a self-defeating motivation.

St. Paul, in the second reading for this week gives us a more positive approach to making our resolutions work for us. He suggests that we look not at what needs to be improved, but at what we already have that can work for us. He says we are all given gifts by the Holy Spirit:

"To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit
is given for some benefit.

To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom;

to another, the expression of knowledge according to the
same Spirit;

to another, faith by the same Spirit;

to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit;

to another, mighty deeds;

to another, prophecy;

to another, discernment of spirits;

to another, varieties of tongues;

to another, interpretation of tongues.

But one and the same Spirit produces all of these,
distributing them individually to each person as he wishes."

I Cor. 12:1-7

What gifts have we received from the Holy Spirit? How have our lives benefited from these gifts? How do we share the gifts we have been given? As we look at the resolutions we might make at the beginning of the year (if you haven't done so yet it's not too late), we need to consider that we have already been blessed in tremendous ways by some powerful gifts that have, perhaps, been put on a shelf somewhere deep in our souls and need to be dusted off.

What a marvelous way for us to start off the year by thinking about how blessed we are by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the most significant resolution we can make is to discern which gifts we have and then decide to put them to good use. Then, at the end of this year we can look back at how greatly our lives have been enhanced and improved. My guess is that we are going to be in for a tremendous surprise.

In joyful hope,

Fr. Tim Seigel