

From the pastor's desk

A New Year Resolution: Live Like You Were Dying

Dear Parishioners,

There is a tradition in America to make some personal resolutions as we begin the New Year. From a Christian perspective, this attempt seems to be a bit misguided as the new “church” year actually began for believers with Advent. This season—Advent—would have been a more appropriate time for us to make changes to prepare for the Coming of Christ. I remind all of us of Advent’s two-fold preparation: celebrating Christ’s First Coming (the Nativity) and awaiting His Second Coming in glory to judge the living and the dead.

While listening to an online presentation recently, one of the speakers mentioned a rather intense and unique spiritual exercise. Set a pretend date for your own death in a month and then do everything necessary to prepare for that day. In other words, what would you do if you only had a month to live and you knew you were about to meet God and face judgment—an eternal reward or punishment—in only a month? What would you do if you knew exactly the date of your own death?

This brought to mind a song released by country singer Tim McGraw in 2004: *Live Like You Were Dying*. The song tries to inspire a person to live life to the fullest in the time remaining. Activities suggested included skydiving, mountain climbing, bull riding and other bucket-list activities. I think the song finally reached much more spiritual depth when it spoke about loving deeper and giving forgiveness that long had been denied. The dying person spoke about becoming the husband that most of the time he wasn’t and becoming a friend that a friend would like to have. The song goes on to mention reading the good book (presumably the Bible) and ultimately facing eternity.

Well then, let me bring this to a more Catholic perspective. All of us have limited time. We have a shelf-life whose expiration date is known only to God. Even if we are given 100 years on earth, what is that brief time compared to e-t-e-r-n-i-t-y? Eternity is forever. Remember that. Church teaching is that we all will inevitably face death, judgment, heaven or hell at the end of our lives (the four last things).

What would you do if that step from eternity were only a month away? Go ahead. Set the date. Pretend that it was only a month away. What would you do to get your life completely in order? Would you pray and go to Mass more frequently? Begin now. Would you make a good, sacramental confession like never before? Start preparing now. Would you forgive that person who has hurt you or ask forgiveness from someone you have hurt? Make the phone call or write the letter today. Would you find more time for your children or grandchildren? Start now. Would you visit that neglected parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle or friend? Just do it. What in your life needs to be done so that when you meet God face to face and have to account for your life here on earth you will be ready—completely ready?

Then [the king] will say to those on his left, *‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.’* Then they will answer and say, *‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?’* He will answer them, *‘Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.’* And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. - -Mt. 25: 41-46

Why not give it a try? Just think of how much more spiritually mature and prepared you would be after such a month of intense preparation! Kinda like spiritual boot camp. Happy New Year!

Fr. Ed Namiotka, Pastor

