

# Resolutions for 2018

I think there is no holiday we so look forward to and are so happy when it's over as Christmas.

Christmas, we all know, should be about celebrating God's great gift to us. Too often it becomes instead an endless series of to-do lists: searching for the perfect gift, planning perfect meals, scheduling all sorts of traditions that our families associate with the holiday.

In truth, the many to-do lists leading up to Christmas both provide us with memories and seem tailor-made to distract us from "the reason for the season."

Now as we contemplate when to take down the tree and who will take down the lights, it is time to focus on the year ahead, which of course means another to-do list: creating New Year's resolutions.

If you are casting about for resolutions, or afraid you have too many of them, I have four suggestions that may save you either anxiety, guilt or both.

Resolution No. 1: Make someone think all that Christmas shopping was worth it by writing a thank-you note. It is a lost art, I know, but a thank-you note can be a little gift in itself. In a world that often seems supremely ungrateful for all its blessings, thank-you notes are a tangible expression of gratitude.

A handwritten note sent via snail mail is the Platonic ideal of thank-yous, but an email thank-you is good too, even if adorned with heart and smiley face emojis. It really is the thought that counts.

Resolution No. 2: Work out a strategy for working out. The vast majority of us usually start the year thinking we need to exercise, diet or both. We set an ambitious goal for ourselves, we fall off the treadmill early, so to speak, and then we throw in the towel and go off in search of a sugar high to cut our disappointment. It's a vicious cycle.

When I had to put myself on an exercise regime, my guide to the workout stations was a bored young woman who clearly had lost her faith in humanity. When I asked her how long people usually lasted before giving up on their plans, she answered with a cynical laugh: "By the middle of February."

So my resolution was to make it to March 1. Whatever you commit to, give yourself a two-month goal. You might find that not only have you created a habit, but you've outlasted those January crowds at your local gym.

Resolution No. 3: The same principle may apply to being a better Catholic. Many of us want to add something to our spiritual life: more Masses, more rosaries, more Scripture.

Again, my suggestion is pick one, and set yourself a goal: Go to a daily Mass once a week until Lent. Say one decade of the rosary every night until Lent. Just pick one thing, and see if you can get to Ash Wednesday (which is Feb. 14 this year). Who knows, in February you might just want to extend that resolution to Easter.

Resolution No. 4: Finally, let us all resolve to add a little civility to our texts, emails and social media. Don't say anything to anybody that you wouldn't say to their face. Avoid anonymous messaging. Say a prayer for someone you want to snark bomb. Or wait 24 hours before you hit send.

Social media is becoming a nasty, bitter space. We can't clean it all up, but we can make sure we don't add to it.

And whatever your resolutions for 2018, may it be a year of blessings for you and your family.

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