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## **"I HEREBY RESOLVE...."**

Resolutions. Resolutions. It's a rite of passage to greet the New Year with resolutions. But where do they go? Do they sort of evaporate? When do I think of them again? (Maybe July 4th!) At some point, I'll be asking myself: how have I kept my resolutions for 2004? Have I really given much attention to them? If the list is long and covers a wide range of my behavior, there is a good possibility I'll find the agenda too much. How can I do all that? The answer is: I can't.

Why not concentrate on one spiritual target that actually has a chance of being remembered? I look at myself, the creature God made. I see how the events of my personal history have shaped me. Here I am today. Where do I want to be tomorrow? What shall I focus on that especially needs God's help to fashion me into a better person?

I reflect on my personality, unique and different from everyone else's. I consider my choices and where they have taken me. I let a quiet calm enter into my consciousness and weigh what I should work on, that in me which calls most strongly for improvement. I do this objectively, not in any spirit of discouragement at my failings. After all, Jesus, Who understands our human weakness, will be there to help me find what I should deal with and how to move ahead.

Is it my almost-uncontrollable temper or a sluggish unwillingness to accept my share of a burden? Am I envious? Do I too readily criticize with an overtone of sarcasm? I don't look at the whole array of faults in myself but dwell on some aspect of me I truly want to change.

I'm making a New Year's determination that has real possibilities of being embraced. The road ahead is a matter of going forward step by step—some small ones and some with a more lengthy stride. "In the mind one plans a course but the Lord directs the steps" (Prv 16:9). I'm not alone in this undertaking. God gives me the year just opening so I can progress along a way that leads upward to a more worthwhile plane of human living. What do I do with the hours? I want to make the most of them, not letting them slip away without caring where they go. In 2004, I'll be growing older but hopefully also wiser. The experiences offered me, whether difficult or exhilarating, come with a summons to use them so they give me a value-laden return. So I think now and then about that special resolution.

In the *Spiritual Canticle*, St. John of the Cross speaks of "the work of the Most Blessed Trinity" within us. We who have Christ's revelation know our God to be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—Who create out of the material in our lives the fulfillment of Christ's guarantees. John says to us, "O souls, created for these grandeurs and called to them! What are you doing? How are you spending your time?" (39:7) In the hush of January days amid the challenges of our Maine winter, we ask ourselves such questions. Each day is a new discovery, something alive with potential, not the same one that went before. As the sun rises, we think of Isaias' assurance, seeing it realized in our Savior. "Then you shall call, and the Lord will

answer. You shall call...and He will say: Here I am." (58:9). Yes, Jesus, I call to You, for carrying this out is the task of both of us.

What I aim to do, I work on with Christ advising me and empowering me. When I'm aware of my resolve, at the same time I'm turning my attention to my Helper. My goal is linked not just to a moral victory but also to a contact with Him that becomes my prayer for His aid. If I fail at times, I do not lose hope but let that failure remind me of how much I need the One Who redeems me.

In the sunshine and in the storms, we are never alone. If too much of our lives seems to be slipping away, God's word brings forth order. "In my distress, I called upon the Lord and cried out to my God... (Who) heard my voice." (Ps 18:7). When we are gladdened by the triumph of success, we recognize divine guidance that has assisted us to bring about the results. "Prosper the works of our hands for us! Yes, prosper the works of our hands" (Ps 90:17). I pause to think again about my resolution.

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