

The Mind of Christ. New Year's sermon.
Fr. Hugh. St. George 1/1/2012

It's not every year that New year's Day actually falls on a Sunday. And It is my pleasure to wish you all God's blessings as this morning we begin this new year.

Some people like to make New Year's Resolutions. I was talking to a woman who showed me her written New Year Resolutions for the last three years.

2010: I will read at least 20 good books this year.

2011: I will read at least 10 books this year. 2012: I will try to finish one book this year.

Her husband also had health resolutions that went like this -

2010: I will get my weight down below 175 pounds.

2011: I will stick to my diet until I get below 200.

2012: I will watch my calories until my weight is below 220.

If you are fed up of making the same resolutions year after year and never keeping them, there is always the option of lowering the bar. Here are some resolutions that you can easily accomplish!

1. I'm going to give up the exercise bike. It's too hard and it always makes me spill my scotch on the rocks.

2. I want to put on at least 30 pounds.

3. I want to take up a new habit - Procrastination seems like the best idea.

This week TV shows and magazines are parading their ‘best and worst’ lists of 2011.

And in the final run up to 2012 we've been treated to the customary annual round of trivial predictions for the coming year.

Noteworthy, well-informed news publications, such as the ones that clamor for your attention while you wait patiently to check out your groceries, offer us significant predictions for the coming year.

The much respected National Inquirer sets forth its predictions for 2012:

You will be pleased to learn that this coming year...

Michael Jackson will rise from the grave in a real life version of his video Thriller and will come out with a new best selling CD.

All Europeans will abandon Europe in a mass Exodus. It doesn't say where they will go.

Sarah Palin will get divorced and then get remarried to George Clooney.

Michelle Obama will give birth to twin boys.

Rapid Aging Disease will affect millions of people. Those already over 55 apparently have no need to worry about this.

And predictably this year, as anticipated every year, extra-terrestrials will land in Florida.

Remember you heard it all here first.

Whether we like it or not, we live in a media driven society. If the media did not powerfully influence us, corporations would obviously not spend millions on advertising.

To a disturbing degree our culture and lifestyles are shaped by the media and advertising and other external cultural forces.

The News leaves us feeling scared about the times that we live in.

For the last fifteen years, talk shows have been telling us to redefine 'normal' to include an ever increasing degree of destructive behavior.

Soap operas promote the message that the essence of life is to be very rich, very beautiful, very moody and very difficult.

Affairs are glamorized as being more romantic than marriage.

Many of our choices are fashioned by television and the internet.

Advertisers stimulate desires in us for expensive items that we don't need, but that can lead us into interminable debt.

Cartoons for children are programmed around the marketing of new toys, conditioning a consumerist mindset from a very early age.

This constant exposure to external influences stimulates our tendency to seek instant gratification. It intentionally increases our sense of dissatisfaction.

So it brings us to an important question...

Do we want our desires shaped by external influences, or by our own free choices?

What external influences would have us believe we want, and what we really want out of life are certainly not the same thing.

Instead of having our desires shaped by external influences we can make a better choice.

At this time of year many people formulate resolutions for the New Year.

Although a lot of people have told me that they gave up making resolutions a long time ago.

Even so, what most of us really desire is peace of mind, someone to love, joyful times to share with them, and the good health to actively enjoy life.

We want a true sense of meaning and purpose, and a sense that our lives really do matter.

We want to know that who we are and how we live makes a difference.

It makes sense to have resolutions to do with taking care of your health and fitness;
of spending time with people you love;
and of doing something that contributes to the greater good - something that truly serves others.

The one resolution that can truly make the greatest difference is in the spiritual category.

But it is better yet to think of ‘spirituality’, not as being just a part of your life, but as being the whole context for your life?

Our reading this morning from Philippians opens with a wonderful resolution that could set the right tone for all of us for this coming year.

"Let the same mind in be in you that is in Christ Jesus."

"Let the mind of Christ be in you."

Why not begin this New Year with a vision of being in close communion with Christ all the time? Then let that vision suggest to you any other resolutions you might want to make.

How about starting this year by declaring:

“This year I resolve to bring my whole life into full accord with God’s will.”

We've had some funny and sometimes ridiculous titles given to different years.

According to the United Nations, 2007 was ‘the year of the Dolphin.’

2008 was called ‘the year of the Frog.’

No. I’m not kidding. This was apparently an effort to raise national awareness of threatened amphibian species.

We've also had the ‘year of the Potato.’

What a life-changing experience that was.

We've had the 'year of hugging', which, strange though it may seem, did not apparently succeed in bringing world peace in its wake.

2012 has been called the Year of International Cooperatives by the UN.

I somehow suspect that this will not have a huge impact on most of our lives.

2012 is also the year of Doom according to the Mayan calendar and a growing number of websites and TV programs are promoting this depressing scenario.

Yes, we have had 'the year of this' and 'the year of that', from the sublime to the ridiculous.

So... How about deciding that 2012 will be 'The year I live according to God's will?'

Ask yourself:

In all honesty have I given myself 100% to the Christian experiment?

What if I were to devote myself to 'letting the Mind of Christ be in me?'

How can we bring our lives into full accord with God's will?

We begin by acknowledging whatever in our life is out of tune with His will. By putting the past firmly behind us and starting on a new page.

Many of you remember the old form of the confession where we'd say:

Almighty and most merciful Father;

We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep.

We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts.

We have offended against thy holy laws.

We have left undone those things which we ought to have done;

And we have done those things which we ought not to have done...

There are three avenues through which the Mind of Christ can grow in us. They are Prayer, Study and Service.

A poll indicated that 90% of churchgoers spend less than three minutes a day in prayer.

Less than three minutes! It's little wonder that many self-professed Christians do not experience God as being very real.

Prayer is our way of communicating with God, to receive His guidance and tune into God's will.

I've always liked what St. Francis de Sales used to say: - Four hundred years ago, he said this:

“Half an hour of prayer a day is essential. Except when you're really busy - Then an hour is necessary.”

Deeper prayer will change us.

It will change our mindsets and help us to become the people God wants us to be.

Everything God wanted to teach us He put into the Holy Scriptures. If we are serious about knowing His will for our lives, we need to be serious about studying His teachings.

Then with our hearts and minds nourished by His Spirit and His Word, we need to act.

We can look for more ways to be of service to God and to assist people in need, both through our church and in our daily situations.

Are you willing to consider making the most profound and powerful resolution you could ever make?

This is the year that I step into full accord with
God's will.

This is the year I get off the fence.

This is the year I commit myself to developing the
Mind of Christ.

This is the year that I put my personal life under His
personal management