



Parish New Year's Resolution

My dear friends in Christ,

At a Parish Council meeting a member asked, as we look to the new year, could we, as a parish, come up with a New Year's resolution. I thought it was a great idea and spoke with our Parish Staff who also liked the idea as well. Several different parishioners over the past year asked if we could pray the *Prayer to St. Michael* as we find ourselves struggling on many different levels: our culture, our government, our Church, our families, etc. I have heard that several other parishes throughout our diocese have adopted this practice of praying the *Prayer of St. Michael* so we will do the same prior to the beginning of Mass each weekend of the 2019 year. A copy of the prayer is in the back of our hymnals. May it give us great strength and grace.

We have included other ways to fortify your relationship with God and strengthen your friendship with Him.

God Bless and Keep You!

Fr. Tim

The Fortification of Prayer

Indispensable in this list of our spiritual fortification is prayer. St. Paul encourages us to "Pray at every opportunity in the Spirit." (Ephesians 6:18) When the Apostles were overcome with weariness on the night Jesus was betrayed, asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane when they should have been consoling our Lord, what did Jesus say to them? "Rise and pray, that you may not enter into temptation." (Luke 22:16)

Not only in Scripture, but the lives of the saints as well, confirm for us that prayer is the indispensable gift in our battle with temptation and sin.



The Fortification of Worship

Prayer isn't just a private matter. Praying not just for others, but with others, forms an important part of spiritual strength. And the most perfect prayer in which we can join with our parishioners is the prayer of the Mass. Worship is a spiritual strength. When we worship God, we enter into His presence in a powerful way.

The Fortification of Eucharistic Adoration

Outside of Mass, the other tremendous refuge is prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

The Fortification of Fasting

Throughout Sacred Scripture, we find that when God's people fast, the power of their prayers is increased, especially when they are engaged in spiritual challenges. The Book of Daniel tells how the prophet once prayed "with fasting and sackcloth and ashes" for three weeks, seeking the deliverance of his people. (Daniel 9:3)

The Fortification of Sacred Scripture

Jesus prepared for His combat with the Devil through prayer and fasting. Then when it came time for Him to engage the Enemy on the field of battle, He chose an effective strength: the Sacred Scripture – the powerful Word of God.

For this reason, one of the essential strategies for spiritual strengthening is to fortify our lives with Scripture. We must listen carefully to the scriptural readings at Mass and meditate on them deeply. We must read Scripture on our own, daily if possible, and ponder how we can apply it to our lives.

We must also memorize scriptural texts that we can use against temptation. Then, we can imitate our Lord by the effective counterassault of quoting the Word of God.





The Fortification of Reconciliation

Christ has given us the seven sacraments to His Church as channels of grace into our lives. That grace is powerful to transform us into the image of Christ and to see us safely home to heaven.

Each time we sin, our relationship with God is damaged. Through Penance, our relationship is healed. Not only do we receive forgiveness of past sins; we receive grace to resist temptations to come. That's why it's so important to go to the Sacrament of Confession regularly.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is possible because Jesus gave to the Church through St. Peter the power to "bind and loose" sins (Matthew 16:16). It's not surprising, then, that He prefaced that declaration with a promise that the gates of Hell would not prevail against the Church in her battle with the Enemy (Matthew 16:18). In spiritual warfare, Penance is powerful!

The Fortification of the Eucharist

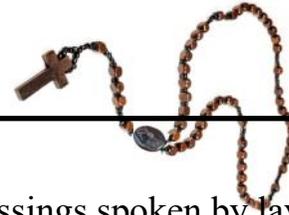
We've noted that our community's worship at Mass is a great and most powerful gift. It's the Eucharist at the heart of the Mass that gives it such might. The Eucharist is the epicenter of God's victorious power in our lives.

The Fortification of Sacramentals

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines sacramentals as "sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects, especially of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the intercession of the Church."

Sacramentals include certain actions, such as the Sign of the Cross and other blessings, as well as objects that have been blessed, such as holy water, oil, salt, candles, incense, rosaries, crucifixes, scapulars, and religious images.

Sign of the Cross: St. John Vianney reminds us that "the Sign of the Cross" is the most powerful gift against sin. For this reason, the Church displays images of the cross so that we can have it continually in front of our minds. For the same reason, the Church wants us to make the Sign of the Cross ourselves at every juncture of our day: when we go to bed, when we awaken during the night, when we get up, when we begin any action, and above all, when we are tempted.



Blessings and Blessed Objects

Both the blessings that are properly given by clergy and blessings spoken by lay people as part of their daily lives (such as table grace) are important sacramentals. They can sanctify our thoughts, our actions, and our surroundings in a powerful way.

Blessed objects may also be worn or carried, especially rosaries, scapulars, crucifixes, and medals. Given Our Lady's strengthening, we should be regularly *praying* the Rosary as well, not just carrying it around!

Prayers for Strength

The Glory Be: This ancient declaration of glory to God affirms his sovereignty and power over all the world.

The Lord's Prayer: When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, the model prayer to the Father which He gave them concluded with a petition to be kept from temptation and to be delivered from evil – or, more specifically, the Evil One.

The Hail Mary: Through the consent of Our Lady, the New Eve, the Son of God became Man and crushed the head of the Serpent who had deceived the first Eve. By the Blessed Mother's assistance, we are able to take part in her Son's victory over evil in our lives.

Prayer to St. Michael:

St. Michael the Archangel defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. AMEN.

Prayer to our guardian angel:

Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom His love commits me here, ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. AMEN.

Blessings are one type of sacramental:

May the Lord Bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. AMEN.

May the almighty and merciful God bless and protect us, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

Bless this house, O Lord, we pray; make it safe by night and day. AMEN.