



Commentaries

Four ways to renew our lives through service



Sarah Hanley

By Sarah Hanley • Posted February 4, 2020

Now that we're a month into 2020, and with some New Year's resolutions already fading, it's time to take action on the key changes for the better we'd like to make in our lives.

We all know the classic resolutions, such as taking care of our health, reading more books or even finding a new hobby. But what about our spiritual resolutions? What about promises we make that bring us closer to Christ? Promises to be more patient, more generous, more forgiving – these are the resolutions that stretch us outside of our comfort zones.

As Catholics, we have been making promises to bring us closer to Christ since our birth. When we are baptized, one of the most important promises we make to God is to follow the example of his Son, Jesus. From that point on, we are disciples of Jesus, responsible for sharing God's love and spreading the Gospel message to one another. We become responsible for each other as one family of God. It's up to us to show kindness, compassion, generosity and hope. It's our job to willingly share our many blessings with each other. When we don't live our lives in this way, we drift away from Christ and break our baptismal promise.

Each new year brings us new opportunities, and the ones we choose truly define us. Some of these may push us out of our comfort zones, but it's in those moments that we find strength.

This year, let's prayerfully renew our baptismal promise to follow Christ and, in so doing, to generously serve others. We can achieve this goal in so many ways. Here are four suggestions to supplement what we're already doing to serve others – or to simply get started:

Volunteer your time. There are countless organizations that could use a helping hand. Contact your parish or a local nonprofit (like the [Catholic Foundation of Greater Philadelphia](#)) to learn how you can help meet the needs of others in your community. Volunteering is also a great activity to do with friends, co-workers or as a family. Exposing your children to charity work helps instill kindness and generosity in them, helping them fulfill their own baptismal promise.

Give a monetary gift. While this may seem like an obvious one, I encourage you to take a unique approach to giving this year. Start a crowdfunding initiative for an organization you'd like to support, open a donor-advised fund that you and your family can create grants from together, or set up a recurring online gift for any dollar amount you feel you can manage.

Be kind. It only takes one person to make a difference in another's life. Share words of encouragement and support to those around you – not just in times of distress, but all the time. Getting into the habit of regularly sharing positive thoughts with friends, relatives and even strangers assures people they are loved and cared for, both by you and by God.

Make time to pray. Prayer is the foundation of our lives as Catholics. Whether you pray in your own words or say a well-known prayer you learned as a child, prayer brings us closer to God.

I hope this new year brings you peace, joy and many blessings — and if you've fallen behind on your resolutions, take heart and take action.

Sarah Hanley is the president and CEO of the Catholic Foundation of Greater Philadelphia. To learn more about charitable giving, visit www.TheCFGP.org/community/funds, or call 215-587-5650.

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