

A REFLECTION FROM REV. DANNY...

New Year, New Start...Yeah, Right!

Yes, folks, it is that time of year again--the time of year when we are all supposed to sit down, reflect on our lives, and get serious about making some changes beginning January 1st! OK, maybe January 2nd if those resolutions involve reductions in our food and alcohol intake, or exercising more. Let's face it; light night parties and hitting the gym early in the morning usually don't mix too well.

I've said it before: I don't do the whole New Year's resolution thing. Why not? Well, over the years I've had different reasons: (1) Why set myself up for a major guilt trip if I'm not 100% successful fulfilling those resolutions? (2) The older I get, I realize losing that 10 lbs and toning up—and maintaining that status throughout the year—ranks right up there with the possibility of Fred Phelps of the Westboro Baptist Church waving a rainbow flag while marching in D.C.'s Gay Pride parade; and (3) The older I get, I tend to forget any resolutions I make, anyway.

Now there is absolutely nothing wrong with making New Year's resolutions. If doing so jump starts healthy changes in your life, by all means do it! At the same time, I would like to offer another suggestion: since taking New Year's resolutions seriously requires personal reflection, why not take some time to do that year round, and not wait until the end of the year to try and fit that reflection in somewhere between all the parties and shopping—or worse, DURING those parties.

Yeah, ever been at a party when someone has had a bit too much to drink and has decided that he or she is nothing but a big loser? Serious personal reflection and too much alcohol usually don't mix too well; and besides, if that reflecting takes a turn for the worse, there is nothing worse than being labeled the holiday party kill joy, right? Even if you don't mix alcohol and personal reflection at holiday parties, trying to do all your reflecting during this time of year can be quite stressful, and that means we will probably focus on what we DIDN'T accomplish this past year—yet another downer.

So, take as much time as you need for this reflection—don't rush it. Give thanks for each accomplishment. Most importantly, even while holding yourself accountable for goals not met, remember the promises of the holy writings of all the world's major religions: God is with us. God loves us. God wants the best for all creation. See, God isn't a spiritual sadist; so there is no need for us to be spiritual masochists. Remember, personal accountability—yes; self abuse—no.

My prayer for everyone in 2014 is that we all take a good look at ourselves both individually and as a community of faith, realize that we are part of the beloved creation of God, and embody this truth to grow ever more into the people God intends—people of love, grace, and peace.

Happy New Year,
Pastor Danny