

The Christian walk is not an easy one, and none of us is perfect. It's my hope this Easter that we all experience a resurrection in our lives to the degree that we need one. Most practicing Catholics don't necessarily need wholesale changes in their lives. However, most of us could use a tweaking. I'd like to present a blueprint for experiencing a resurrection. This plan involves moderating our behavior along with moderating our minds. There are seven simple steps to the plan, which works for someone who could be called a CAPE Catholic (Christmas, Ashes, Palm Sunday and Easter) or for someone who is a practicing Catholic.

What are you going to do with your life today?



STEP ONE: Make the resolution to combat sin in your life, particularly sexual sin. Wisdom 1:4 states: "Wisdom will not enter a deceitful soul, nor dwell in a body enslaved to sin." Indulged lust especially blinds a person to truth, enslaves, discourages and makes prayer difficult. To paraphrase St Augustine, a person has as many masters as he or she has vices. Each master demands a hearing. Each master demands to be fed. Sustained serious sin can make an otherwise sane person "mad." Saint Paul writes in Romans that if you are a slave to sin you are truly a slave (Rom 6:20). It owns you. But if you are a slave to Christ, you live in freedom, because nothing else owns you. Therefore, choose to live in freedom by becoming a slave to Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

STEP TWO: Make the resolution to *spiritually* cross-train. I hit the gym three days a week, run once a week, and either do a boxing workout or ride my stationary bike on a fifth day. I take two days off. In a similar manner, I spiritually cross-train. Besides Mass and daily required prayers, I spend forty-five minutes before the Blessed Sacrament three days a week. During Lent, I increase it to an hour. On a fourth day I pray the rosary. On a fifth day I either pray the Divine Mercy chaplet or pray the Sinner's Prayer a hundred times before two Icons. That's how I spiritually cross-train. My routine works for me, and I encourage you to find one that works for you. Remember to thank God for the good things that happen throughout the day and ask for forgiveness for the sinful things that you choose during the day. Also, pray as you pass a cemetery, hospital or school. All of these things constitute our spiritual cross-training.

STEP THREE: Make a resolution to moderate your speech. There is a simple speech rule to live by as a Catholic: if something isn't true, necessary to say, and kind – don't say it. It has to meet all three criteria. Even in the case of evaluating an employee, charity must rule the day. Also, tone down the rhetoric. Growing up my saintly mother (wink) would never allow us to say that we hated someone. She'd tell us to use the word "dislike". Then she'd ask us to be specific as to why we disliked the person, and after that, she'd say, "Now think of something you admire about the person." This was not easy! But it taught us to try to see the totality of a person.

STEP FOUR: Make a resolution to have a docile mind. Many people who perhaps have a high IQ can be completely lacking in true wisdom. Like the Pharisees and Sadducees who rejected Jesus, they are so filled with hate and/or their warped ideology that they are blind to the truth. If you don't believe this, just watch any cable news show. A wise person sees issues from every angle. They aren't a one trick pony. A Catholic tries to think comprehensively and therefore reasonably. The Lord's teachings aren't meant to be weapons. To help you think like a true Catholic and think reasonably, I'd like you to remember the following example:

The Church at the Council of Florence (1442 AD) stated that there was no salvation outside the Catholic Church. Other saints and theologians clarified that statement before and after the council but some Catholics used that teaching as a bit of weapon against non-Catholics without clarifying it. Vatican II (1962-65) essentially put the matter to rest by affirming that yes, there is no salvation outside the Church, but wherever there is truth and love in other religions God is present and the Church is present. The truth belongs to the Catholic Church and people of good will who have lived good lives are saved through Christ even if they don't know it. So the teaching is still triumphant and true but has a very reasonable explanation, at least to a Catholic.

STEP FIVE: Resolve always to be generous with your time, talents and treasure. St. Paul tell us that the Lord loves a generous giver (2 Cor 9:7). He repays a hundredfold.

STEP SIX: Make a resolution to incorporate monastic practices into your life. As Catholics we live *in* this world but are not *of* this world. In other words, the more you engage the world, the more it will likely pollute you. We probably all speak too much and give our opinion too much. A monastic existence is one of prayer, study and silence. Try to read Scripture or some other spiritual reading daily and try to always be reading something involving Catholicism.

STEP SEVEN: Make a resolution to go easy on yourself and others. Our lives are challenging enough and no one goes undefeated.

I pray that this seven-point blueprint will serve you well and help you to experience the grace of Christ that flows out of the joy of Easter – HAPPY RESURRECTION!!!

