



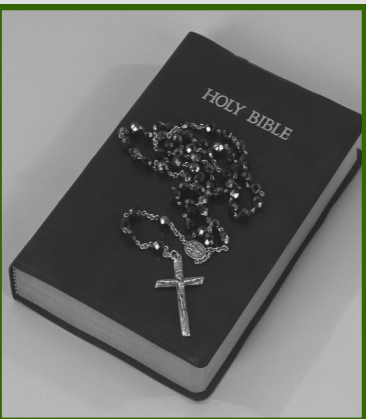
## Prayer of the Month

God of love & life,  
Guide, guard & protect  
my children through-  
out this new year.  
Open my heart to re-  
ceive your grace so  
that I might lead them  
to you in all they do.  
Amen.



## Parenting Tip of the Month

Just like you, your children have resolutions they want to accomplish this year. How about praying for them? Go to: <http://goo.gl/yFyFvW> for prayers to support your children.



## Ready Yourself for the New Year

According to the Statistic Brain website, 45% of Americans make New Year's resolutions. The top resolutions?

#7 Quit Smoking, #6 Learn Something Exciting, #5 Staying Fit and Healthy, #4 Enjoying Life to the Fullest, #3 Spend Less, Save More, #2 Get Organized, #1 Lose Weight.

These are great resolutions. But there is a problem with all of them. According to the same website, only 8% of people who make a resolution actually follow through on it. Why the horrible success rates? Is it because New Year's resolutions don't work?

Actually, resolutions are good. They reveal in us a desire to be better than we are - and a hope that being better is possible. They don't have to be made in the beginning of a new year, but since we're starting this year afresh, many people choose this time of year to "get better" at something that is important to them.

Reread the list again and notice that there is one thing that makes most of these common resolutions very difficult to accomplish. Each one defines a general goal, but none of them describes what you have to do to accomplish the final goal. Think about it. If you want to quit smoking or lose weight or get organized, you have to change something *within* you. You have to completely turn some part of life around in order to accomplish the goal. You have to improve your resolve. You have to get your heart in order.

Here is the bottom line on changing a behavior. If you want to turn a resolution into a reality, set your sight on internal improvements first. There is at least one thing that can help us increase our odds of making those internal changes and becoming better people. As Catholics, we can call upon the grace of Jesus Christ to empower our desire to be better persons. And, when we do this, we will experience something very powerful.

When we ask for God's help to make us better, He will provide us with the necessary strength to change our behaviors. In fact, if we let God know that we can't meet our goal without him, He will empower us. You see, God wants us to be better. He wants to help us achieve what is right, good,

Here are three recommendations for New Year's Resolutions for Catholic parents to improve in the New Year - with their concrete actions to get you started.

### **RESOLUTION #1: ESTABLISH A DAILY HABIT OF PRAYER**

Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God. (CCC 2559) It is founded in our humble acknowledgement that we need God's help to accomplish what is good. We will not grow deeper in our relationship with God unless we open ourselves to intimacy with Him. That means regular prayer.

**Action:** Pair a simple habit of prayer with one of your existing morning rituals. If you're a coffee drinker who likes to linger over your last cup of coffee in the morning, that would be a perfect place to slip in a daily prayer. Drive a distance to work? How about tucking a rosary in your car to say on your way to work? Do you begin your work day at a computer? Consider placing a short prayer under your keyboard that you can read each day. No matter what you choose to do, keep it simple so that you can easily do it every day. Once this initial prayer habit is established you can grow from there.

### **RESOLUTION #2: TAKE MORE ADVANTAGE OF THE SACRAMENTS**

The Sacraments are our doorway to a greater faith life and relationship with Jesus Christ. Each sacrament is an effective sign of grace that is instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. They are the power that most people are missing in their resolutions to change. Jesus' grace readily available to us through the Sacraments so that we can make the decision to change and gain the power to do it.

**Action:** Increase your reception of the sacraments by just one step. If you are going to Reconciliation twice a year, increase that to every three months. If you go to Mass nearly every Sunday, challenge yourself to go every week. If you are going to Mass every Sunday, try to go once during the week as well. And finally, work on increasing the sacramental grace you received through your participation in the sacrament of Holy Matrimony by doing just one thing more each day to love your spouse and your children more selflessly.

### **RESOLUTION #3: READ SACRED SCRIPTURE**

Sacred Scripture refers to the books contained in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Catholics believe that the books of the Bible contain the truth of God's Revelation. Each book was composed by human authors who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. There are 46 books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament.

**Action:** Begin by locating your Bible and placing it near a chair that you sit in each day. This may mean the Bible finds a new home near your kitchen table or on the end table by your Lazy Boy. Don't have a bible? You are in luck. The entire bible can be found on-line at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/index.cfm>. If you want you can subscribe to have a passage sent to you each day.

There you have three resolutions that can order your heart and three simple actions to get started on them. These three simple actions can bring peace and progress to you in the coming year. Give them a try!

Following these recommendations can help you prepare your children to really learn and develop during their time in school. But this is just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit [www.twl4parents.com](http://www.twl4parents.com) for more strategies for helping your children become the best they can be. And for the best systematic approach to parenting, consider purchasing the Teaching the Way of Love program, which can be found at the same website.

This article series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, authors of the Teaching the Way of Love home study series for parents. Find out more at [www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love](http://www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love).