

Why do people Leave the Church



The new year is always a time for big decisions, big hopes and big disappointments, and - for resolutions. For the next few weeks, gym memberships and diets will soar. Tempers will rise, failures will lead to disappointments. Some people will decide to go back to church, while others will decide to leave their church. Some will leave for other churches. Others will leave the church for good. It is not our task to second guess their decisions. In the end, all will be opened up before the judgment throne of God and He will decide with Justice.

Like all resolutions, those deciding to continue with Church, even when it is not the perfect church of their expectations, will find blessings in abundance *in their perseverance*. Unlike secular New Year preferences, personal strengths and willpower are not going to assist us when it comes to our lives with God. What we need is grace. If we are to commit ourselves to anything positive for our new year of grace, it should be a commitment to listen more earnestly to God in all of the ways He manifests himself to us, particularly in the lives of those others He sends to us. The corollary of that is that we pay less attention to, be less concerned with our own bruised pride and sensitivities. That will cost us, just as it cost Jesus so much when He died on the cross for us. That is a True Christian resolution.

But what about me...?

I am reminded of the hit song by Shannon Noll...*It isn't fair, I've had enough now, I want my share Can't you see? I wanna live But you just take more, you just take more What about me? What about me? What about me?* This popular song runs counter to the message of the Kingdom of God. While we might empathise with his struggle to be heard, a genuine Gospel response should be – *what about you* before I worry about my own needs, desires and complaints. This is what it means to take our lives to the foot of the cross, a place where we view life from His vantage point, hanging there high up on the cross' beams. Once we do that, life changes and we become less important than the will of God and less important than the needs of others.

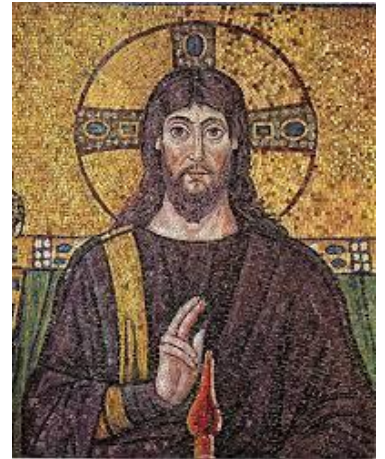
There is another song that also comes to mind as we ponder the whole idea of making resolutions for the New Year. That song is one that has endured for generations and in some ways, it sums up the entirety of the contemporary challenges facing the world and our churches. The song: *I did it my way...* a title that says it all. One thing, it makes it easier for God the Judge when we confess...*Regrets, I've had a few But then again too few to mention I did what I had to do I saw it through without exemption I planned each charted course Each careful step along the byway And more, much, much more I did it, I did it my way*. In a song of only 193 words, the first personal pronoun is used 27 times! That says it all: 44% of the words are all about the self. No room for God or others.

Stop deceiving yourselves. If you think you are wise by this world's standards, you need to become a fool to be truly wise. For the wisdom of this world is but foolishness to God **1 Corinthians 3:18-19.**

We were created to live by Divine Wisdom

Human wisdom is the fruit of knowledge and experience. In that sense it is limited. The wisdom of the Holy Spirit on the other hand is a very different level of knowledge. What heavenly wisdom grants is the grace of being able to see things through God's eyes. It is seeing the world, situations, problems, everything, with the eyes of God. This wisdom grows out of an intimacy with God, from the kind of relationship a son has with his Father. When we are in communion with the Lord, the Holy Spirit transforms our hearts and we are able to understand the magnificence, the love and the power of God.

Those who are wise in the ways of God will listen to what the Spirit is saying as He speaks to our hearts. That voice is the sound of divine wisdom, but it is up to us whether we listen or choose to follow our own hearts and minds. If we listen to the Holy Spirit, He will teach us this way of divine wisdom, and enable us to see the world through God's eyes, to hear with God's ears, to love with the heart of God, to judge with God's judgment. This is the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, a gift beyond measure.



God's Wisdom is a beautiful thing. It is not a matter of intelligence, quick-mindedness, creativity or cleverness. It is nothing we can do for ourselves or attain on our own merit. Wisdom is a gift of God. It grows out of humility. It is being able to see things from God's perspective. Wisdom flows from knowing God, from loving him, and from pondering his law with openness and trust. Wisdom sees the larger picture, the here and now and the world to come. It is patient. It does not get swallowed up in the immediate situation but brings to every situation the perspective of the heavenly throne — His goodness, truth, unexplainable love and ultimate desire to have us to live with Him forever.

Remember: *Those who are not for me are against me* – Matthew 12:30

God calls us and chooses us for a plan, for a purpose that is His own. At our baptisms we were anointed with the gifts and graces we need to collaborate with God in completing that plan. And so, when it comes to discipleship, it is the God perspective that is most important. Without this divine quality to our lives and more particularly to our faith lives, we end up becoming more important than God himself. We are governed by our feelings and not by our calling to be disciples of the Gospel. Instead of serving God we end up finding ourselves serving the mission of the Evil One.

True Wisdom depends on putting God before the self (always)

God is wise, the fount of all wisdom. He carries out a plan that often surprises us, shakes our world upside down and then results in an outpouring of abundant grace. We are wise only when we humble ourselves, place our complete trust in Him, and dedicate ourselves to growing in our understanding of His Gospel, a Way revealed in Christ and in His church.

If any of you lacks wisdom, go ahead and ask of God who gives to all liberally and without restraint and it will be given to him...James 1:5