

Keep your promises ... with the grace of God!

Exactly 6 months from now ... on Saturday, June 6th, 2016, our parishioner, Deacon Jim Handerhan ... and St. Mark parishioner, Deacon Wyman Vintson, will stand before Bishop Baker in the Cathedral of St. Paul downtown and make 4 Promises to him right before Bishop ordains them as Catholic Priests in the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

Here are the 4 Promises they will make ... Bishop will ask them:

1. Are you resolved, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to discharge without fail the office of priesthood in the presbyteral order as a conscientious fellow worker with the Bishops in caring for the Lord's flock? To which they will answer, "I am."
2. Are you resolved to celebrate the mysteries of Christ faithfully and religiously as the Church has handed them down to us for the glory of God and the sanctification of Christ's people? They will answer, "I am."
3. Are you resolved to exercise the ministry of the word worthily and wisely, preaching the Gospel & explaining the Catholic faith? They will answer, "I am."

And finally the Bishop will ask:

4. Are you resolved to consecrate your life to God for the salvation of his people and to unite yourself more closely every day to Christ the High Priest, who offered Himself for us to the Father as a perfect sacrifice? To which they will answer ... "I am ... with the grace of God!"

That's really how everything works ... with the Grace of God!

There's simply no way to live out any of our promises without the grace of God.

That includes your Marriage promises,
our Priestly promises
and even our Baptismal promises.

God is ready to help us keep our promises by offering us grace=supernatural help.

Right after a couple makes their Marriage Promises to each other, the Priest says,

*"May the Lord in his goodness, strengthen your consent
and fill you both with His blessings."*

This is a clear reference to the ongoing help to be received from God.

Right after a Priest makes his Ordination Promises to the bishop, the Bishop says:

"May God who has begun this good work in you bring it to completion!"

Another clear reference and plea for the ongoing help of God!

The only chance we have of keeping any of our promises is with the grace of God!

Married or unmarried, all of us have made promises to God.

When a person is Baptized, the Priest asks them (or Parents/Godparents for infant):

1. Do you reject Satan? To which they answer, "I do."
2. And all his works? And they answer, "I do."
3. And all his empty promises? And they answer, "I do."

So as baptized Catholic Christians, we've all made promises to God ... solemn promises ... promises to turn away from Satan and be true to God.

These are promises we must keep in order to enter into Heaven.

And how are we going to keep our promises? With **the grace of God!**
With the unmerited, supernatural help of God!

Please remember the 4 responses that Priest candidates make when Bishop asks,
Are you resolved ...? They say, “I am, I am, I am, I am ... with the grace of God!”

Whether you're living out your Marriage promises, your Priestly promises, or your Baptismal promises, the same thing is required ... the help ... the Grace ... of God!

And **God is more than happy to give us His grace** so that **we keep our promises!**
St. Paul verifies this in our **Second Reading** today when he says,

*“I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you
will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

How reassuring this is!

**Paul is saying that God is committed to bringing to a successful completion ...
the work of sanctification that He began in us on the day of our Baptism.**

Incidentally, those words of St. Paul ... are the very words

the Bishop uses in the **Ordination Rite** when **he says,**

“May God who has begun this good work in you, bring it to completion!”

So admit it ... we ... need ... God's ... help!

We absolutely do!

And what does God need?

He needs our free and sustained cooperation with His grace.

He needs us to be dedicated and determined ... to keeping our promises!

**This is why the Church has us take the time every Easter to renew our Baptismal promises. We consciously call them to mind and we promise once again ...
to renounce Satan ... and all his works ... and all his empty promises.**

**Think too ... of the other promises we make to God through the year ...
during Confession and every time we pray an Act of Contrition.**

It' then that we say: *“I firmly resolve with the help of thy grace to sin no more
and to avoid the near occasion of sin.*

Think of what you're promising!

You're saying, *“I firmly resolve to sin no more.”*

You're saying, *“I firmly resolve to avoid the near occasion of sin.”*

And **notice how we make those promises ...**
by inserting the phrase ... “*with the help of thy grace!*”

God wants us to keep our promises to Him and He will always be there to help us.
We need to be open to cooperating with His help.

He will bless our determination.

He will help us with every grace we need, so that, as Paul says today,
“(we) may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.”

That’s **the goal ... to be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.**

Now, **just when will that day come?**

It can come at any time. **Just open your eyes and look around you.** **Every moment of every day** people are dying and being called home to make an accounting to God.

In our little Parish, we’ve had **17 funerals this year ... 4 in the last month!**
3 weeks ago, we buried a 46 year old ... Father of 2
This past week we buried 2 ... a 59 year old Deputy Sheriff ... Father of 2
and ...a **56 year old ... Mother of 3**
on Monday we will bury a 77 year old ... Father of 8
and on **Wednesday, we will bury a 63 yr old ... Mother of 2.**

One of these died suddenly ...

3 of them died within 1 to 4 months of the onset of sickness.

None of them will have this Advent to prepare to meet the Lord.

Right now ... all of us do ... and wisdom tells us to use it wisely.

Our day to meet Jesus is coming ... and it may be sooner than you think.

Advent is the time to get ready ...

to prepare our hearts and souls to meet Christ.

Think for a moment, what you would do if you knew that this Christmas ...
was the second coming of Jesus! What would you do to get ready for that day?

Would you run to the mall and see how many doorbusters you could buy?

Or, would you run to confession ... to repent and receive forgiveness for your sins?

Would you sit down and write Christmas cards to all those people who you love?

Or would you reach out to all those people who you’ve withheld your love from?

Would you sit for hours watching Christmas Classics?

Or would you kneel for hours in earnest prayer?

St. Paul gives us **this advice** in his letter today,

“This is my prayer, that your love may increase ever more and more ... to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,

That’s **the goal** ... to be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.

If Jesus called you home today,

would **your heart** be pure and blameless in His sight?

Have you kept your Baptismal Promises?

Have you renounced Satan and all his works and all his empty promises?

Have you kept your Wedding Promises?

Please recognize how important your answers will be ...

they will determine your Eternal destiny!

Spending time this Advent out shopping and decorating your house for Christmas has **nothing to do** with your upcoming meeting with Jesus.

Whereas going to **Confession** and spending time in prayer are extremely powerful ways to prepare you for your eventual meeting with Jesus!

As Isaiah tells us today, **the day will come when** ...

“all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

We need to be prepared for that day.

It is coming! And **just like Christmas** ... it will **be here** before you know it.

Let’s take comfort in **Paul’s words** ... **that God** is standing by with every grace necessary for us to be with Him. **And** let’s do our part to cooperate with His grace.

All of us freely made Baptismal promises.

Some of us have freely made Marriage or Priestly promises.

Let’s recall them often and live them with **great determination**.

Remember the responses that **Priests** make on their Day of Ordination. **They say,** *I am resolved, I am resolved, I am resolved, I am resolved ... with the grace of God!*

You say it too! *I am resolved to keep all my promises ... with the grace of God!*

God’s grace is available in the Mass, in all the **Sacraments** and in **daily prayer**.

Let’s open ourselves to His grace and cooperate with His grace every day ...
so that we can fully live out all our promises.

May God, who has begun this good work in you ... bring it to completion!