

Dear readers,

The year 2009 has taken leave of us to leave room for 2010: as always, it is a time for resolutions and good wishes. A great many of you have sent yours to us. We return ours to you with all our hearts.

What is to be thought of good resolutions for the New Year? Are they useful? Are they followed by results? There are some who say that good resolutions don't work – or not for long. Too remote from our former habits, extreme, constrained, founded on the will, perhaps punitive, they quickly become forgotten. They only revive our culpability and our low esteem. Others claim that good wishes are praiseworthy, perhaps unwarranted for those whom you are not particularly fond of, and whom you feel yourself obliged to honor through courtesy, social status... and therefore not honest.



But in reality, even those who do not like to make resolutions for the new year, nevertheless cannot resist in making one or two: this year, I will no longer work on Sundays, I will say the rosary every day, I will visit my sick mother two times a week, I will lose two kg., I will eat less sweets, I will get back into sports, I will stop smoking...

To take resolutions responds to a need for actualization of self and a desire to perfect oneself as a person. The beginning of the year seems an opportune moment to do this because it is a beginning, the moment for a renewal, an occasion for changing. We set down objectives to better motivate ourselves. It's a question of self-regulation.

In 2002, a study was made. Since then, no other study has been taken on this subject, the evidence most likely being sufficient... Some 280 persons having precise objectives and globally compared had been initially questioned about their plans, then contacted again by telephone 6 months later. The telephone interview aided in evaluating the outcome, the success or the changes achieved that would attain the hoped for objectives. It turns out that amongst the persons who had set down their wishes at the time of the new year, 46% drew nearer to their goals, in proportion to 4% of those persons who had not taken the trouble to really plan their goals for the future. In other words, to be decided increases 11 times the chances of success! And this is true of every resolution and of every engagement.

There are three rules to observe in order to arrive at keeping one's resolutions and at maintaining the motivation alive all throughout the year.

The first: the resolution must come from yourself, it must correspond to convictions and values which are your own, and not imposed from the exterior through social pressure. It is the same as in the case of those who undertake therapy or a diet for reducing; the results are better when the person does it because she considers it to be important for herself rather than in order to please someone else.

The second condition of success is that one needs to have a certain competence in that which one is to undertake, that is to say, to feel that one is capable of reaching the goal without being forcibly prevented. If not, there arises the risk of discouragement. It is necessary to avoid resolutions which are out of our reach, such as to want to run the marathon if we have never run before or to learn to play the piano if we have no talent for music. If I have not the competence, there is more risk for me to become discouraged and to abandon it. The reverse is also true. If the goal to reach is too easy, the motivation will dwindle. One must choose one's challenges in relation to one's competence.

Lastly, the third and final condition of success for all who travel on the pathway of resolutions: we must receive help from those around us. We must feel united, affiliated and understood by noteworthy people of our circle. If these three conditions are not respected, you risk joining the majority of the people who have difficulty keeping their New Year's resolutions!

So, do not be afraid of commitments, the initial energy which you place in your wishes is a determining factor in their realization. The tradition of good resolutions for the New Year is therefore an excellent thing, of which it would be a pity to deprive oneself...

With my best wishes for the New Year,

Father Jürgen Wegner