



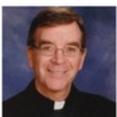
Happy New Year! The echoes of new year greetings remain in the air even a week later. People who are in the custom of making New Year's resolutions have done so by now. Perhaps some have already been broken. (If so, don't worry. Lent is right around the corner and a perfect time to start over again).

The beginning of a new year always provides us with the opportunity to think about what we want for ourselves, our families and our lives. New Year resolutions can help capture and renew a spirit of hope as we seek to better ourselves in some way. Exercising, losing weight, eating healthy food always seem to top the list of resolutions. It seems we all want to live better, healthier and more meaningful lives. Going back to school, moving or seeking some kind of change in our job are resolutions that can truly be life changing.

This new year I would like to invite married couples to consider and discuss one action they could take that would help to strengthen their relationship, renew their love and deepen their marriage bond. It could be as simple as a date night, a regular walk together, or reading the same book from time to time. Perhaps you could plan a special way to celebrate your anniversary this year even if you have not reached 10, 25 or 50 years together.

In particular, I would like to extend an invitation to couples who are only civilly married to come and talk with me or Fr. Juan about having your marriage blessed in the Church. Celebrating the sacrament of marriage even with a small group of family and friends can be a very meaningful and memorable experience in your lives. I would also like to invite couples who are divorced and remarried civilly to come and talk about how they might be able to celebrate the sacrament of marriage and experience a fuller participation in the life of the Church.

At the conclusion of his apostolic exhortation on the family, "[*The Joy of Love*](#)", Pope Francis writes, "all of us are called to keep striving toward something greater than ourselves.... let us keep walking together.... for what we have been promised is greater than we can imagine." May we all enjoy the beginning of this new year and discover its special blessings unfolding before us each day.



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