



## THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

January 5, 2025

### *St. James Catholic Church*

*3909 Harrison \* Kansas City, Missouri 64110*

*"Small enough to know your name, big enough to make a difference."*

#### *Reflection from Fr. Garry Richmeier*

Many people make New Year's resolutions in January. Many people give up on those resolutions by February. Good intentions are great, but without accompanying planning, perseverance, and effective execution, good intentions don't have much of a chance of producing results. If change in one's life is actually going to happen, it takes much more than good intentions.

Making a realistic plan is one thing needed to effect change. It feels good to imagine that I will be in better physical shape in the new year, or will be more well read, or whatever. But the next step is to get very specific about how to reach that goal. That means lining up the resources needed (sufficient time set aside, money if needed, someone else's help, etc.) Then you plan how exactly to use those resources (the when, where, how details). It is critical that the plan be realistic. Many people have grandiose, unrealistic ideas of what they want to accomplish, but soon realize that they have bitten off more than they can chew and then give up. Matching the goal/plan with the available resources is crucial.

Change also is more achievable if broken up into smaller steps. I may want to lose 30 pounds, but focusing on losing one pound at a time will work better. It takes quite a while to lose 30 pounds, and it's easy to get discouraged and give up. Losing 1 or 2 pounds takes less time and can be encouraging, and a motivation to keep going.

Then there is the perseverance needed to stick with the plan and the execution of the plan. We live in a society that attempts to eliminate the need for perseverance in any endeavor. We'd much rather have a pill to make us lose weight than have to endure the longer haul of eating right and exercising. We want to simply buy a new item when the old one breaks, instead of the more labor-intensive fixing of the old item. Quick, superficial relationships are touted as love because true loving relationships take time and perseverance.

Perseverance is a challenge, but some things can help us keep going. Having the support of others can give us a boost when we feel like quitting. Keeping track of small successes is also important, instead of focusing only on the failures. Predicting that we will falter sometimes can lessen the shock of setbacks, and help us start again. And maybe the most important thing is to be gentle and compassionate with yourself. It is almost impossible to persevere with a critical, blaming voice in one's head saying you'll never reach your goal. Most of us need to practice changing that voice to a more encouraging one.

These strategies can help us keep New Year's resolutions, but they can be helpful as a general approach to life's challenges any time of year.