

New Beginnings

(excerpted from *For Your Love Alone* by Michael Syslo)

Traditionally, January, the beginning of the New Year, is the time that people choose to re-make their lives. It is in this month that diets are started, exercise plans go into effect, new regimens are begun, new disciplines are tried, new forms of spirituality are tested, and millions of resolutions are made and broken. January is the time when you reflect on the past and resolve to make the future better.

As Catholics, we are called to grow closer to God in all we do. As humans, we tend to not live up to that calling. There is so much in life, so much in this world, that distracts us from where we should be: spiritually, emotionally, and physically. The sad fact is that none of us, not a single one of us, are exempt from the need to change and make ourselves better.

Our focus here is not about diets or exercise plans or a thousand and one different resolutions. It is about making ourselves better spiritually. It is about growing closer to God. On June 30, 1990, Pope John Paul II shared this reflection with us: “*Strive to be witnesses of Christ’s love by putting into practice His Word of Life.*”

- *When you help your neighbor, whoever he is, you proclaim the Good News of Christ, which makes universal brotherhood possible.*
- *When you visit a sick person, you are a sign of Christ’s mercy toward those who suffer.*
- *When you forgive, even your worst enemy, you are a sign of the forgiveness of Christ, who never nourished hatred in his heart.*
- *When you refuse to accuse someone without proof, you proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God and His justice, and no one is excluded.*
- *When, as Christian spouses, you remain faithful in marriage, you are an encouragement to all and a sign of the eternal covenant of love between God and man.*
- *When, as a young man or a young woman, you save yourself for the one who will be your spouse, you are a testimony of the unique value that love can construct.*
- *When you radiate Christ, you awaken a desire for total self-giving in His service and inspire new priestly and religious vocations.*
- *When, in the light, you call evil that which is evil and refuse to practice it, you are witnesses of Christ’s Light.”*

As Vincentians, we are called to be “witnesses of Christ’s love” to all those we encounter. Yes, we strive to find Christ in those we meet and serve; but our hope is also that those we meet and serve will see Christ in us. Within the list of possibilities that Pope John Paul II gave us above, Vincentians have more opportunities to be witnesses of Christ’s love than most other people. Read them over again carefully and you will see what I mean.

So, while January is the traditional time for new beginnings, it is not the only time. The time for new beginnings is when you are ready, when you recognize that something needs to change, when you have reached a point that says now is the time. Well, think carefully about it and pray about it because now *is* the time.