

Not your father's New Year resolutions

The old year is in the rear view mirror. Once again, we stumble hopefully into a New Year. I used to think all the talk of New Year's resolutions was just some sort of cultural artifact; maybe the result of our country's rich and variegated religious, racial and cultural stew. Look closer, though. You find that all places in which there are seasons also have had, for ages, some sort of ceremony for saying "my bad" for the acts of the past year, and "I'll do better next time" for the coming year.

And this impulse is ancient; well beyond recorded history. No doubt if you're huddled in an unheated mud hut for the winter, with three unbathed generations crowded together with the dogs for warmth and chewing on last year's wild garlic, you have a lot of time to think about how things could be better the next time around.

Yet there's something fresh and clean about the winter. Hopeful, even. When New Year's comes, we know we've moved through the worst of the dark. We all can sense a new start as the days lengthen and the midnight blues of dawn and dusk are more evenly spaced each day. We know that, once again, we've been given a new beginning.

I think mankind has always felt a deep gratitude for that new beginning; for the knowledge that we get another chance to nudge our lives a little more into the center of the path. By writing down our resolutions, we acknowledge to ourselves (and those to whom we show them) our failures of the past. We also make a public announcement of our determination that the New Year will be a new and improved model. Nothing puts the pressure on like a public announcement.

I've got my own resolutions this year, and they have a lot to do with living the best life I can in the remaining time I've got. I have spent far too much time worrying about what isn't, instead of being grateful for what is. There's some good raw material there for a few stiff resolutions. I won't tell my resolutions to you, but I will write them down and work hard on keeping them. In the meantime, here's something I wrote. I hope you'll enjoy it while you're writing down your own.

Spring Again

Spring arrives; with it,
A seasonal disregard
For the worst-case scenario,
As days unwind and my blessings
Always outweigh my burdens.
Astarte's crescent arcs across
The April night.
Cherry trees shiver, shake themselves;
Petals floating past on Easter air.
Now, stop chewing that garlic, and get to work on those resolutions.
Surviving winter pansies
Glare at the world
From their altar on my terrace.
It's a new world again;
Right here, right now, every second
Flooded with God's green beauty.
There's just no time to worry
About tomorrow.