



MONDAY'S MEAL

SUSTAINABLE NOURISHMENT FOR THE LONG DISTANCE RUN

Here's To Failed Resolutions

by Jonathan Rogers

Monday's Meal is a service of The Oaks Classical and Christian Academy.

Each meal is selected specifically to feed and nourish parents for the long distance run. If you found it helpful, consider passing it along.

"...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds..." Hebrews 10:24

For many years I gave up on New Year's resolutions altogether. One can only fail so many years in a row before one starts to feel like a fool for making grand declarations. I can very much relate to these remarks from Kathleen Norris in *Acedia and Me*:

"I may be struck with a vigorous desire to do things differently from now on. How easy it will be, I think, to change my habits, to be more attentive and prayerful. Yet if I am not careful, this little surge of vanity will dissipate into nothingness in the daily grind."

It's painful but also helpful to acknowledge that there is real vanity in the idea that I will suddenly become a different kind of person simply because the calendar has flipped from one year to another.

I have come to believe that January 1 is a terrible time to start a new habit, for the simple reason that it's much too easy to "start" a new habit on January 1. There's not much else to do on New Year's Day except watch ball games and eat turnip greens and black-eyed peas. You get a false idea of how easy this new habit is going to be, and then when the daily grind starts back up on Monday, you get knocked down and you feel like a failure.

So here's some unsolicited advice: If you want to do some extra writing or reading or praying on January 1, feel free. But maybe wait until next Monday, when school or work starts back up, to think of yourself as having "started" on your New Year's resolutions. If you aren't fitting a new habit into your daily grind, you aren't really starting a new habit.

If you've made New Year's resolutions, failure is probably in your future; if you don't, one suspects you've made some pretty unambitious resolutions. The question is, what are you going to do then, after you've failed? Here's Kathleen Norris again:

"When I fail, as I must, I can only recall the desert monk who told his disciple, "Brother, the monastic life is this: I rise up, and I fall down, I rise up and I fall down, I rise up and I fall down, I rise up and I fall down."

To commit to new habits is to put yourself in a position to fail. But that doesn't mean it's foolish to commit to new habits. As our old friend G.K. Chesterton said, anything worth doing is worth doing badly.

One last quote from Kathleen Norris's *Acedia and Me*: "If I am inspired by some good thought, if I aspire to do better next time, I am not a fool. I am only being the person I was created by God to be."

So here's to failed resolutions. And here's to getting up the next morning and trying again. Happy New Year.