

WHAT HOLDS US BACK?

We live in interesting times. As we try to figure out our new normal, we are invited to make decisions constantly. Do we feel safe? What is the number of people gathering together that makes it uncomfortable for us? Does being outside or inside really make a difference? A lot of us may spend an enormous amount of time answering these and other questions. It can deplete our energy and focus. What distracts us? What keeps us from staying focused?

The Gospel invites us to rid ourselves of the things that hold us back. The other day I had to make a decision about fulfilling my obligation to be a participant in the Fox Valley Half Marathon. I signed up for the virtual race a while back and had all of September to complete the 13.1 miles. Last year with things shut down I seemed to be in better shape, but regardless of my fitness level this year, I knew I needed to get the walk/run done. I had picked Thursday, my day off, to get out early and make the miles count. After I woke up, I found it easy to get distracted. I needed to check emails, even on my day off. Then I thought that the clothes I had chosen to wear on the run needed to be switched out. The smoke alarm in my house had indicated that the battery was low, so I got out the ladder and changed that. Meanwhile, it was getting later in the morning and I wasn't yet out the door. Then my mind began to think about how if paced myself at 15-minute miles, mainly walking the race, I might not have enough time to complete the 13.1 with enough spare time to get to the wake at the funeral home by 2:45 p.m. All of this just kept pushing me further and further from the start line. Some of these things did not need my immediate attention. I was missing the focus on the start line.

Jesus tells us we are not to lose sight of the start line to eternal life. He is bold to tell us if our hand is a distraction, cut it off. If the eye is a problem, pluck it out. It is important to realize we are to be focused on getting to heaven. We are to remove the distractions that keep us from getting there. Spiritually the battle is often about procrastination. Forgiveness of another is a process, so we tell ourselves we will get to it later. We know our neighbor needs help, but we think maybe someone else can do it this time. Evening prayers, prayers before meals, or thanking God in the morning sometimes gets reduced to just a few seconds because we are exhausted at night or we hit the snooze button too many times. Excuses, like distractions, blur the vision of getting to the starting line. Once we get there God will share His saving love, His unconditional forgiveness and the promise of eternal life.

Whatever holds us back, move through it, God is worth it...



Father John Ouper