

ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE FOR GOD

This weekend is the running of the Chicago Marathon. It is one of the World Marathon Majors that invites thousands of athletes of all shapes, sizes and abilities to cover a 26.2-mile course. Behind each runner is a story. Some are elite athletes who have trained for this moment to make history. They use their God-given talents to honor God with speed, efficiency and a platform of hope for others. Some travel to accomplish a goal that will last a lifetime. It is an internal experience that will give them confidence every day of their life. Some will find it in their hearts to run and walk for charity. These will make a difference and respond to a need to which they are personally connected. The challenge attracts people from every state and many walks of life to participate in one event closing down streets and making history. Beyond world records that might occur if the conditions are right, there is something greater going on. Humanity is joining together to prove a goal can be accomplished, whether personal or professional. It is an amazing event.

In the Gospel today Jesus challenges the people of His day with words that pour out like the miles of a marathon. He says it is hard to enter into the Kingdom of God. The more wealth; the more distractions. The more possessions; the more distractions. The person who came to see Him knew all the rules, yet he left sad. It takes courage and focus to enter the Kingdom of God. It takes a desire for the things of heaven to enter the Kingdom of God. It takes sacrifice to enter the Kingdom of God.

My last full marathon was the one I ran in Tokyo in 2014. I knew that to cross the finish line I had to stay connected to the start line and the effort of conditioning to get me there. My training was not what I wanted it to be. It was my first year here as your pastor and I was attuned to listening and learning all about the parish. Time to train was minimal and I ended up with pneumonia from the stress of this transition as well. Yet I knew this was an opportunity of a lifetime and it would complete my world marathon travels so I could complete all of them. It took me to a depth within myself to get to a place where I felt it was worth the effort to do that marathon. I knew the pain it would cause to my body, the mental toughness it would demand of my brain and the cost of embarrassment if I traveled across the world and did not finish. It was worth it. The experience was amazing and the journey it created within me is still a driving force I tap into when I lose sight of the finish line.

The Gospel tells us, with God all things are possible. God can overcome the challenges we pose to Him, the doors we lock to Him and the sacrifices we choose not to embrace. God overcomes all of this. When we are distracted, God is not. When we hide behind power and wealth, His poverty of becoming a man crucified has all the more significance. When our possessions possess us, He shows us that desire can never be fulfilled by the things of this earth. We are so blessed by the power of God.

He makes all things possible.



Father John Ouper

This weekend I have the privilege of being a part of the team praying for all of the athletes and medical staff at the Chicago Marathon. Please keep in your prayers all the runners, their families and all the charities that will make a bigger difference in the world because of this event.