

## A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us”  
(Hebrews 12:1a)*

The sacred author of the Letter to the Hebrews uses vivid imagery to make clear to us the harm sin does to our ability to follow after Christ. He describes sin as “clinging” to us as if sin were ropes or chains slowing us down and impeding our ability to move. We might also imagine sin as weights tied to us that prevent the free movement of our limbs so that we are unable to follow after Jesus. The vividness of this imagery is all the stronger since the sacred author uses the familiar analogy of the Christian way of life as a race towards the finish line that is the Kingdom of Heaven.

We would be very surprised if an Olympic athlete were to line up to run a race for the gold medal with weights tied to his legs or ropes wrapped around his body. We would wonder why he is trying to do such a thing. “Doesn’t he know,” we would ask ourselves and everyone around us, “that what he is trying to do is foolish? There is no way he can win impeded in such a way.” The sacred author is telling us today that we should be asking the very same question of ourselves in regard to the race we as disciples of Jesus Christ are in. “Don’t you know,” the sacred author is saying, “that you cannot reach the Kingdom of Heaven if you are impeded by your sins? How will you run the race well if you cannot reach your full potential as a Christian because your sins are weighing you down?” We should be asking ourselves that very question on a frequent basis. To try and run the race as Christians while being weighed down by our sins is foolish and most likely leads to failure to cross the finish line.

If we wish to run well, we need to be freed from the sins that cling to us and drag us down. We cannot do this solely by our own efforts. We need the help of God. Fortunately, God desires to give us this help. The sacred author states that Jesus endured the cross so that we might be freed from sin. Let us accept God’s help to rid ourselves of our sins so that we might run well. God’s help comes to us through many sources. The surest are the Sacraments of the Church such as Reconciliation. Yet, we should not ignore the many other opportunities that God sends to us to renounce our sins and leave them in the dirt as we run forward towards the Kingdom of Heaven.

Yours in Christ,

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Pastor