

CAN WE TAKE TIME OFF FROM OUR FAITH?

When I was in high school, I remember going to rugby practice and doing some of the same drills every practice. And we had some drills we did once or twice a week. One particular move involved ball control where you would come in and, as Coach Foley described, “bear claw” the ball from your teammate, then spin out in one motion.

Over and over again, we practiced this move and every now and then there would be a variation of the maneuver in a game. During one match, my teammate Troy had the ball and was surrounded by three players trying to tackle him. I envisioned myself just as at practice and ran right up to the wall of players, stripped the ball from Troy, spun out, and ran 30 meters to score a try (a touchdown in rugby language).

Sometimes the mundane and repetitive seems like it can be skipped or isn’t important, then suddenly we can see how it pays off. In our faith, our payoff is a deeper peace and a greater joy. Most of all, our payoff is eternal.

Which brings me to Deacon Dave’s story from his homily of driving down the road and seeing a billboard that read: “Take time off for some bad behavior.” This billboard implies quite a bit, but the biggest implication is that it is a lot of work to “do the good” and “avoid the bad,” causing us to need a break from “being good.”

As sad as this sounds, I think many people can relate to this. Have you ever been in a group of friends and you’re the only one who chooses the right thing? Are you the “good kid” in your group? At times, this can get tiring and you maybe even want to give in. Maybe you’ve thought of doing something bad “just cause.”

Sometimes constantly doing the good can cause jealousy or resentment. You begin to say to yourself, “Why does Eric always get away with everything and here I am doing everything right all the time?” Or you think, “Can’t I just be bad now and be good later in life?”

Both of these thoughts are dangerous. Doing the good — living the moral life — isn’t really a chore if we have the correct disposition. Sure, at times following Jesus requires a lot of work and discipline. But, like anything worth the work, the end result is certainly worth it — it *was* when I scored in the rugby match. Just think of all the practice that went into learning an instrument or dance or honing your skills in basketball. It was in practicing the right way consistently that you could excel in the performance or game.

In our faith life, we “practice” by way of virtue. Virtue, in short, is consistently doing the good. When we take a break, it’s called vice. The more we give into vice, the more likely we are act immorally. The more we practice virtue, the more we can overcome vice.

It’s risky not to practice the good — the biggest risk is our soul’s eternal salvation. Yet, we have a culture that makes it foggy and tells us it’s pointless to live our Christian faith. In fact, we have a culture that likes the teachings of Jesus, but rejects the Teacher.

Jesus doesn’t call us to “take a day off for some bad behavior.” Jesus invites us to “have life and have it abundantly,” leaving us more fulfilled, joyful and peaceful (John 10:10). The world offers a foggy sense of what it means to practice the good with its concern on everything being instantaneous and “on demand,” but true reward comes with patience and is worth the delay when we keep the end goal in mind.

-By **Chris Epplett**, *High School Youth Minister*

FOG LIGHTS

FOR REFLECTION: What makes it difficult for me to do the right, or practice the good, in my daily life? What is it like to watch friends do bad things and get away with it? Is it discouraging? How can I ask Jesus to give me courage and stay the course in the fog?

CHALLENGE: Intentionally wait for something longer this week that will give a better result (i.e., baking something instead of microwaving it). Likewise, do this with something spiritual (i.e., staying more patient in prayer). Speak to Jesus about your experience.

DEEPER CHALLENGE: Examine your conscience of all the fog in your life, then go to Reconciliation to clear the fog.

FEARS IN THE FOG

1) Write down three fears you have in the fog of your life/our culture.

2) Name three fears you have in sharing your faith in a world that prefers the fog.

TAKE COURAGE! Take these fears and offer them to Jesus by either placing them in front of the tabernacle or in the collection basket as an offering to Jesus to clear the fog in your life.

PERSONAL NOTES