

Delayed Gratification

Objective: How do we have a grateful heart when we don't *feel* like it? As any athlete knows, you don't decide to run a marathon the day you forsake your couch-potato-ness. It takes hard work, training, and a lot of time. A way to train to be more grateful is to work the spiritual muscle of gratefulness by delaying the rewards of a pleasure... delayed gratification.

Song Suggestion: We Walk by Faith

Bible and Catechism Readings:

1 Corinthians 9: 24-27

Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

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Philippians 3:12-14

It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity,* but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ Jesus. Brothers, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus.

Catechism 1086

Accordingly, just as Christ was sent by the Father so also he sent the apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit. This he did so that they might preach the Gospel to every creature and proclaim that the Son of God by his death and resurrection had freed us from the power of Satan and from death and brought us into the Kingdom of his Father. But he also willed that the work of salvation which they preached should be set in train through the sacrifice and sacraments, around which the entire liturgical life revolves."

Catechism 2540

Envy represents a form of sadness and therefore a refusal of charity; the baptized person should struggle against it by exercising good will. Envy often comes from pride; the baptized person should train himself to live in humility.

Catechism 2339

Chastity includes an *apprenticeship in self-mastery* which is a training in human freedom. The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy.¹²⁶ "Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint. Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward to his goal by freely choosing what is good and, by his diligence and skill, effectively secures for himself the means suited to this end."

Saint: Zacchaeus: You all know the story of Zacchaeus. Tax collector (considered a traitor because he was a Jew, but he worked for the Romans). He wanted to see Jesus, climbed a sycamore tree because he was short, Jesus called him by name, and he promised to give to the poor half of his wealth and to repay four-fold all those he had cheated. He forsook much of his wealth and risked his social stature for a greater end: Jesus.

Vignette: It is very easy for a man to desire to become more holy. It is another thing to deliberately and intentionally train for it on a day by day and minute by minute basis.

For me on Saturdays there is a long list of chores to do (mow the lawn, clean the house, run errands) and I often find that if I do the easiest (and most fun) chores first I get grumpy much easier because I often have the last and least desirable chore looming over me like a dark cloud. But if I choose to do the most difficult tasks first I am more joyful the entire day and evening. Sometimes the most difficult thing is to decide to do the toughest tasks first.

Choosing to delay a small pleasure can be like exercising a muscle that over a long period of time can develop a strong virtue of gratitude, joyfulness, and self control.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

Do you procrastinate? (never, rarely, occasionally, frequently, always)

Do you have a routine when you get to work or when you get home from work? Can you re-order your routine that may please your wife or children or coworkers more?

Share with your Small Group a small way you could try (train) a small activity to be delayed for the intention of someone else.

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