

Pastoral Musing 06-09-20 (St. Columba, Abbot)

How does “I have to” turn into “I want to”?

I suspect it starts in the heart (spirit / soul), when something that starts out as a duty becomes a desire. I’ve experienced this recently with walking for exercise.

For a number of years I would go walking each morning, but it was more of a stroll with my dog; a way to get my dog out to do its “business.”

But about nine months ago, my chiropractor talked with me about walking for exercise in order to get healthier. He suggested walking with purpose. Not just strolling with my dog, but walking at a pace where I could have a conversation, but have to catch my breath between sentences.

I took him up on his counsel and turned my morning walk into exercise.

At first it was difficult. I had to consciously tell myself to get up and to walk longer and with a consistent stride. I didn’t need to do much more than that because the terrain in my Virginia neighborhood provided plenty of leg muscle and aerobic challenges. Overtime I gained consistency, but it was still more of a “have to” than a “want to.”

That changed when I moved here to NE Georgia.

At first I continued to get up at 5:30 and take Katee for the most vigorous, 20 minute walk I could while towing a 65 lb. Airedale around. After about two weeks of that I wanted more. I started to get up at 4:30, say my wake up prayers and then take Katee for a 15 minute stroll where she could sniff and mark and do what she likes to do.

I then take her back to our apartment and go out on my own and *walk*, for exercise. I currently walk for 35 minutes, which I plan to increase. The terrain here is just as challenging, so a steady pace turns my walk into vigorous exercise. I really feel it. I work up a good sweat.

I’m now beginning to “want to” walk each day! I’ve come to the point where even when my back is being “cranky,” or it’s pouring rain, or a tree has torn from its roots and fallen within feet of me, or I’ve slipped down into a roadside drain culvert to avoid oncoming traffic, I’ve not backed away from taking my walks. I *really want to* walk each day!

This same kind of transformation from “have to” to “want to” can take place with our practice of the faith.

We all know we “have to” practice our faith for it to be healthy. We have to pray. We have to read Scripture. We have to attend mass each Sunday. We have to be willing to serve. If we don’t, we are essentially CiNO’S (Catholics in Name Only).

But how can we turn this “have to” into “want to”? By doing what I’m doing with my walking!

We need to formulate a plan and then start doing it. Set an alarm to get up earlier in the morning to pray or as a reminder to turn off the television each evening to read the Word. Be at mass each Sunday. Find a way to serve. Make a commitment to what we “have to” do and then do it!

As we do, the presence of the Holy Spirit within us will change our heart and sooner than later we will find the “have to” has become a “want to.” What a blessing this will be to our faith!

This is my musing for today. Thanks for reading it.