



## Running the Lenten Race in the Year of Faith

Lent can seem like a marathon. We start out with good intentions and resolutions to finish the race a better, holier person. More than half way through, however, some of us have “hit the wall” and can’t seem to take another step. Some of us have already stopped, or haven’t really started. Still others haven’t stopped, but are strolling along, and not exactly running at a gazelle-like pace.

Whatever situation we may find ourselves in during this Year of Faith’s Lenten season, it is helpful to reflect on the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians, “Run in such a way that you may win.” (1 Cor .9:24). Not everyone who enters a marathon intends to win – only one can win the prize – most people just want to run. Lent is a different kind of race though. That begs the question: what would constitute a win in our Lenten observance? Could the answer be how many times we successfully denied ourselves something, rooting out that problematic vice, or acquiring the discipline to live out a virtuous act? While all of these are helpful – the “prize” we are struggling for is a deeper relationship with Christ and His Church. In this race everyone can be a winner by persevering to the end.

At the beginning of the Year of Faith Bishop, Cunningham suggested that we might prayerfully reflect on the Nicene Creed to evaluate our own faith. Today provides a similar opportunity to reflect on how our Lenten commitments have drawn us closer to our Savior thus far. If we find that we have slowed, or ceased our resolutions, now is the time to “Run in such a way that you may win,” and begin the race anew.

One reason so many of us weaken our resolve around this time in Lent is that we have been running the race alone. The spiritual life is a race intended to be run body and soul united with our Lord. He gives us His strength when our will wanes. Sacraments, like water in a marathon, are the life giving strength we all need to finish our race united with our Savior – especially through Reconciliation and the Eucharist. If you have been waning this Lent, turn to the sacraments:

- Attend a daily Mass
- Spend some time in prayer after Mass on Sunday adoring Him in the Blessed Sacrament
- Reconciliation is available every week in our parishes and during this Holy Week, “Reconciliation Monday” will be offered in each parish across the diocese from 4-7 p.m.

Turning to these opportunities of sacramental grace will give us much needed strength and we will already be winning the race, since we will have received our Savior into our hearts.