

Embrace the Habit

How do you feel as you go about a normal day – busy, anxious, rushed, at peace, something else? Do you think this feeling is good or bad? What would you ideally feel each day?

How do you feel about the pace of your life? What in your life right now most consumes your mental energy? In what ways do you feel like life is passing you by?

Could you ever see yourself becoming a nun, priest, or religious brother? Why or why not?

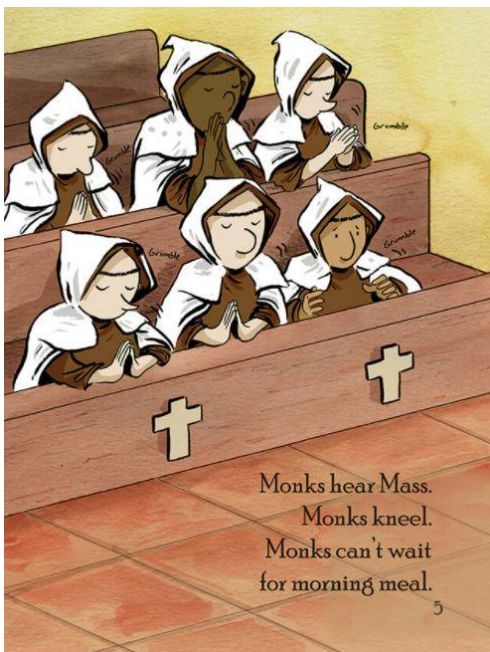
We tend to be prisoners of the moment – to overvalue our present experience because it is more real to us than the past. Do you find yourself doing this? Is this a healthy way to live life? Why?

Do we put too much emphasis on the product and not enough on the process? Like, do we care more about grades, wins, and getting into a good college than actually learning material, building friendships, and developing life skills?

What is your life about? How could answering that question help you to be more focused?

One of the reasons we're such big believers in retreat is that it helps put life and faith into perspective when things can be so easily distorted by busyness and deadlines. How do you determine what in your life is most important or deserving of your time and attention? Is it possible we put too much emphasis on things that aren't that important in the big picture?

Another reason retreats are important is that they promote REST – not sleeping, necessarily, but active rest for the spirit, soul, and body. And this rest differs from relaxation or distraction because it is active (not like sitting on the couch watching Netflix) but not concerned with being productive. How do you rest?



Dietrich Bonhoeffer has said “the restoration of the Church must surely rely on a new kind of monasticism, which has nothing in common with the old but a life of uncompromising discipleship, following Christ according to the sermon on the mount.” How do you feel about this quote? What might a new kind of monasticism look like?

Elsewhere Thomas Merton penned “the Monastic life demands first of all a profound understanding and acceptance of solitude... but this capacity for solitude is nothing else than the full affirmation of one's identity, that is to say, the complete acceptance of oneself as willed by God and of one's lot as given by God.” State this quote in simple terms. What does it mean to you to accept yourself completely?

How do you feel about solitude? Have you ever voluntarily spent a significant amount of time alone and silent? What was that experience like?

When in your life do you retreat from the daily grind? Do you view Mass as a retreat, or HSM, or even Saturday coffee by yourself?

In our *Run, How Fast Can You?* Podcast on this topic, Sarah and I gave some suggestions for scheduling your day – making your bed in the morning, scheduling time for prayer, eating, work, and rest, and consciously allowing God to permeate all aspects of your day. Do you have a regular schedule for your days? Is there any activity you're doing that you need to stop? Are there any habits you need to start doing? (Eating – make time for meals, don't just snack all day. Sleeping – allow yourself unrestricted sleep time, no lights, no tech. Prayer – make a habit for prayer a couple times a day, stick to it, be cool with silence, don't just say "my work is a prayer" but pray before, during, and after work)

The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard said that the saint is the person who can will the one thing... the kind of person who knows exactly what their life is about. What does it mean to you to "will the one thing"? Do your choices drive you toward "the one thing" in your life?

Who or what in your life is suffering because you're busy doing so many good things?

What are some practical ways that you can simplify your life? How can you automate or streamline parts of your day to clear up mental space? How can you deal with mental and spiritual clutter, anxiety, frustration, and the like?

What can you do this week to help simplify your life physically (your stuff)? Mentally (your emotions or attitude)? Spiritually (your faith or prayer)?

A good system to schedule your time is to have a "Weekly Rhythm" – instead of a rigid hour by hour plan for your days, it creates blocks of time and activities that helps to shape your week:

- Each day has 3 slots: morning...afternoon...evening. Oftentimes a meal accompanies each slot. (I use 4 slots: Morning, Afternoon, Evening, and Night – basically 9am-Noon, Noon-3pm, 3pm-6pm, and 6pm-9pm)
- Start by carving out your Sabbath, which is a recommended 3 slots – Perhaps all-day Sunday or Saturday Evening and Sunday Morning and Afternoon
- Next carve out a recommended 6 slots at home with your family. (3 of these 6 can also be your Sabbath slots)
- Next carve out a full slot for "balcony time" (I call it white board time – it is a time to take a step back and work on your life and plans instead of executing those plans. For you, it will probably be part of a weekend day or an evening)
- Next plug in the regular stuff: school, sports, extracurriculars, work, Church, HSM, homework
- Next come all the things that are important for life but are probably the things you like to do least. The idea here is that we all have these routine tasks that we tend to push off...procrastinate...because we dread them. So, it is best to pick a slot(s) each week that you can dump all these undesirable things in. It's good to choose a time of day when you're at your best to tackle them. Then after this slot, plan a weekly reward of some type—perhaps lunch with a special person, or have it be the day you take off early and go home, or perhaps you take a few hours on this day to do whatever you want. Something like that.