

A powerhouse of prayer

During my 3 a.m. morning bike ride, I ride in an envelope of darkness; well, almost darkness, except for the generously spaced street lights. Once I ride onto the bike track, I feel safe from the occasional vehicle that may pass.

Such time gives me an opportunity to get away from busyness and distractions. It allows me to filter out the unfinished business and prepare for a new day. A morning ride provides a welcome escape from the distractions of the day. Instead, it provides an opportunity to go within, using the simple sounds from that time in the morning, to become a springboard to more spiritual sounds. The sound of the waves caresses the sand; the feel of the wind stroking your face; the smell of the fog as it envelops and protects you; the occasional outside house light reminds you of human beings still in slumber land; the occasional passing of a car, reminds you that some of humanity is still awake at such a godly hour.

Hours later, I can drive down the same beach road and the context and scene has completely changed. The light is fully alive. The noise has multiplied. The rush has intensified. Humanity has descended onto the day. The 3 a.m. quiet sounds have now being masked by the sounds of busyness and noise. Silhouetted houses now stand bereft of people who have departed for work elsewhere. Some people have ventured out into the daylight to walk along the walking track that I navigated several hours earlier.

As I put both time frames of this journey together, I am reminded of Paul's assurance that what we see now dimly as in a mirror, one day we will see face to face. My 3 a.m. dim encounter leads me to reflect on the mirror of a new day that opens up to me later.

The two slices of life that I experience above remind me of Lent. We all need some quiet reflective time that envelopes our soul, away from the soon to intrude busyness of the day ahead. One of the things I do for Lent is not to watch television. I may miss the latest news breaking story, political debate or even weather forecast. But, instead, I can spend that time nourishing my mind with some quiet time to read, write and pray. I'm sure if the world is supposed to end and I missed it from television, someone will let me know so that I will be ready to see life more clearly.

Recently, our parish restarted our 24/7 Perpetual Adoration with the blessing of our new Perpetual Adoration Chapel. Hurricane Katrina destroyed our previous Adoration Chapel but it didn't destroy our hunger for some special prayer time to accept the invitation of the Lord to come aside and pray. I can look out any time of the day or night and see three or four cars parked outside. Then, I know that inside, before the Blessed Sacrament, there are people praying. In that quiet, sacred space, they have come away from the noise of the day or the sleep of the night to set aside one hour to commune with their Maker. On entering the chapel, they turn their back on the day or night and turn their attention to their soul's journey. They pour out their heart and soul to their Creator, as they filter out the distractions and worries of life, even for a short time.

Having the privilege of joining them at any time of the day or night, I know that I, too, can come aside and allow the Lord to help me see more clearly his path for me. I can also look out and see the cars parked there and know that there is a powerhouse of combusting prayers ascending like incense to the Lord.

Tomorrow morning, I will arise and dust off the cobwebs of sleep and ride into the night, knowing that, side by side, in different places, we are all communing with the Lord.