

Walking through Lent

Devotions and Scriptures
Adapted by St. John Health

March 6 - Ash Wednesday

MAKING THE DECISION TO WALK

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:7

The 259 steps up to the Whispering Gallery of St. Paul's Cathedral in London are challenging. The passageway is narrow, the steps sometimes slippery and the light is dim. The view at the top, however, is breathtaking.

Not all visitors to St. Paul's make the decision to climb to the Whispering Gallery. Some have legitimate physical reasons for bypassing the challenge but others are too hurried or not convinced that the climb is worth the exertion and energy.

We make decisions everyday regarding our physical, spiritual and emotional health. It is so easy to procrastinate and fill our days with everything but that which is good for us. This week as you begin on this walking journey and decide to be good stewards of the body God has given you, may you walk by faith and grow stronger spiritually and physically as you spend time with your Heavenly Father. Congratulations on making the decision to come on this journey!



Questions to ponder:

How has my faith developed throughout the years?

Were there special people who mentored me in my faith?

What steps am I taking to strengthen that faith?

Is God telling me to step out in faith about some issue?

March 7

“Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path.” Psalm 119:105

Your word
is a
lamp
to my feet
and a
light for my
path.
Psalm 119 vs. 105

Turn on my flashlight!

One of the best features on my cell phone gives me a bright beam of light when I need it most just by asking for it. All I have to say is, “*Turn on my flashlight*” and instantly a blinding spotlight appears that has helped me find lost or dropped things, has kept me from stubbing my toes, and has helped me find my way in the darkness.

God’s Word is our flashlight and we don’t even have to ask Him to turn it on! The Bible shows us the path to travel and lights the way for us. God will never leave us in the darkness.

Lord God, you sent your Son as Light of the World to illuminate our paths. Your word is alive with everything we need so that we can see in the darkness and be directed in a new light. Open our hearts and ears to hear the call to walk the well-lit path with you. In His name, Amen.

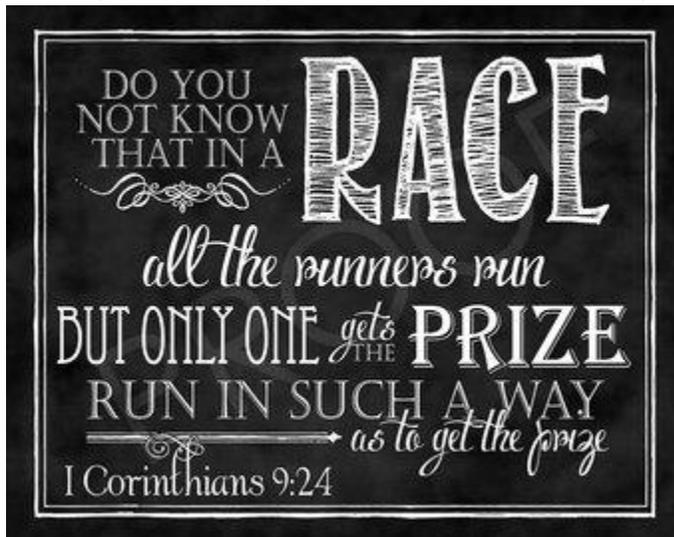
Ruth Ann Crecelius

March 8

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.”

1 Corinthians 9:24

Athletic contests take self-discipline, strength, and stamina but there is only one competitor that wins the prize. When we run our spiritual



race we must also have self-discipline, strength and stamina, but the spiritual prize is not limited to one winner. Many people will win a place in the kingdom of God.

The path of faith is not easy but demands us to persevere, to endure, to push past our weariness as we approach the finish line. We must remember

that the reward that awaits us is not a medal that is displayed one day and then sold on eBay the next. Our reward is eternal and intangible.

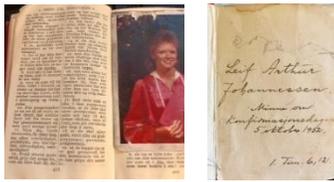
Dear Lord, give me the patience to always wait on you and never run ahead of your plans for me. In this race of life grant me grace to focus and never shift away from your purpose and help me to discipline my body and mind so that the works of worldly things will not rule my life. In Jesus name, Amen.

Gary Crecelius

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 1 Timothy 6:12

Strid troens gode strid, grip det evige liv, som du blev kalt til, du som og har avlagt den gode bekjennelse for mange vidner!

The day was Sunday October 5, 1952.- eight months after Norway hosted the VI Winter Olympic Games. While the entire country was celebrating historic victories, the Johannessen family was celebrating for a different reason. In a southern port village called Kvinesdal, 15-year-old Leif Arthur, youngest son of Lauritz and Anna Johannessen, was celebrating his Konfirmasjonsdagen. - (Conformation Day). An important day for every Norwegian conformant, it is a rite of passage publicly proclaiming the transition from childhood into adulthood. Required by law and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway, without a confirmation certificate one could not enter the military service, get married, or even testify in court. Traditionally, on that special day, family, friends and neighbors would gather for worship and celebration and each conformant was given a New Testament highlighted with a personal conformation verse.



Leif Johannessen is my father. After his untimely death in 1995, I found his very worn New Testament. From its condition I could tell that this little red book was well used. My Norwegian was not at a level to read the sacred words; however, I could decipher a message handwritten inside the front cover: Leif Arthur Johannessen- Minne om Konfirmasjonsdagen- 5 Oktober 1952- 1 Tim 6,12. (Memory on Conformation Day October 5, 1952). The book naturally fell open to 1 Timothy 6 -bookmarked with two photos, a snapshot of me when I was around 2 years old and my HS senior picture. The corners of the photos were well worn; and, I knew that this little book was always with him, even after he started a family, when for most people life can become a little too busy for such nostalgia. I knew this book wasn't a nostalgic artifact from his past - this book was most definitely a part of his daily life.

As Christians, we know that ***we walk out our faith with fear and trembling as we hold fast to the eternal life to which we are called with all of our might*** - we remember our faith again and again each time we desperately ride out each storm in life and when our mountain top experiences crumble to the ground. No, the transition for a child into an adult doesn't happen in an instant on a single day - it's a paradigm that can take decades and it requires a whole lot of faith.

Naturally, my father's ***Konfirmasjonsdagen***, "transition from a child into an adult", didn't happen immediately. I cannot imagine all the lonely nights at sea for a 15-year-old galley boy through many tempests, as well as the lure of the sights and sounds at almost every sea port in the world testing of his faith during his service with the Norwegian Merchant Marines. The bold steps it must have taken to immigrate to the USA and the learning curve and faith this must have required. The unexpected selection by draft to serve in this new country's military - the experience of transitioning from a Norwegian sailor to a soldier in the US Army must have been quite a frightful faith-testing time in his life. Eventually, he met a beautiful, high-spirited, southern girl from North Carolina, and in a giant leap of faith they were married on July 1, 1961 in Sand Hill Chapel at Fort Benning, Ga.

Perhaps none of these life changes and big adventures ever came close to making him feel like a real adult. I don't know However, through every surprise and adventure he kept the faith offered through that a little red book that never let his side. My father's ***Konfirmasjon*** verse prepared him for and sustained his faith through the most difficult leg in the journey of life-- adulthood.

The day was Sunday April 5th, 1964 - Leif Arthur Johannessen became the father of a 5 lb. baby girl who they named after his mother. I believe that was the moment he had been fighting for all those years - this was his ***Konfirmasjonsdagen*** according to Norwegian tradition, the transitioning into an adult had finally happened. At that moment Leif Arthur Johannessen began his faith journey as an adult, ***fighting the good fight of faith*** in the presence of this new life he held in his arms. My father continued ***to fight the good fight of faith*** - until Jesus called him home. I'm not sure why my photos were the only ones he carried with him and neither of my younger brothers - I guess this little Norwegian-American ***Prinsesse*** may never know. Personally, I think the placement of my photos in that little red book next to



that verse offered him some comfort and peace as he slowly and, now I know, ***faithfully*** watched his high-spirited southern girl from North Carolina begin her own journey of becoming an adult and learning how to ***fight the good fight of faith!***

Takk pappa jeg elsker deg! Anna Lisa Johannessen

