

Racing Through Ordinary Time

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By Lucia A. Silecchia

Recently – when it was *still July* – a friend sent me a text from the supermarket with a photo of a Halloween candy display in the aisle. I expected that the Halloween blitz would be coming soon. Yet, “back-to-school” sales are still in full swing and, in my mind, August is still summer!

I guess I should not have been surprised. After all, I did see “back-to-school” sales advertised in June, making me wonder how someone could possibly go back to school before even leaving school for the summer. Perhaps Halloween candy must be sold in the summer so that Christmas decorations can come out right after Labor Day and Valentine’s Day cards can be on the shelves the day after Christmas. Of course, they too will disappear quickly so that the Easter candy can come out before Lent even begins. Maybe next year, Halloween costumes can be on the shelves in June.

Why the rush?

I appreciate the joy of anticipation. I understand the need to plan. I know the satisfaction of checking things off a “to do” list early. Yet, as the race through the months seems to accelerate every year, I have to wonder why.

I know much of this is driven by commercial interests. The longer that products sit on the shelves the better it is from a consumption perspective.

Yet, I worry that this also reflects an all-too-common and, I fear, growing tendency to anticipate our tomorrows at the expense of treasuring our todays.

I’ve done this myself. From the time I was a toddler and well-meaning adults asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, tomorrow seemed like an exciting place to be. When I was in kindergarten, the most adventurous thing in the world seemed to be starting “real school” in the first grade. Then, like most eighth graders, high school seemed to be a great journey on the horizon. Then, in high school it was college, in college it was graduate school, in graduate school, it was a first job, and then a second job, and then moves and new escapades were eagerly planned and anticipated.

But, as time goes by and I have gotten older, I am starting to realize two things.

First, time seems to be passing by far too quickly on its own. My parents warned me this would happen and, as with so many things, they were right. Thus, I am coming to resist all of those things that try to, artificially, hasten time along. Halloween can wait when these precious weeks of summer still linger.

Second, and more importantly, I am coming to appreciate the way that today holds so many joys – and sorrows, too, -- that I will miss if I constantly keep my eyes on what will

come next. Prudence and planning for tomorrow are important parts of adult life. But so too is realizing that the 1,440 minutes that God has given me today deserve my full attention, deep gratitude and wise use. I have no promise of anything beyond today. Indeed, if I have learned anything this past year and a half, it is that precise planning for the future is so often impossible.

But what is possible is to wake up grateful for the gift of today. To look at the people I love and be grateful for their presence today. To pray for my “daily bread” without demanding the long term meal plan – confident in the assurance that God will provide what I need for today. Seeing a blazing sunset, a friendly stranger or wide-eyed kitten are the joys of today. Hearing my phone ring, or a favorite song, or those cherished words “*I love you,*” or “*I’m sorry,*” or “*Thank you*” or “*Don’t worry*” are the joys of today. Feeling a friend’s embrace, a summer breeze or the sand of a beach are the joys of today. Smelling a late summer rose, fresh bread, or a whiff of hearty food are the joys of today. Having quiet moments alone with God and hectic hours with the people I love are the joys of today.

I pray that there will be blessings that fill your tomorrows and mine. But, as I get older, those words “*tomorrow will take care of itself*” (Matthew 6:34) mean more to me. I understand them a bit more now. I understand a little more with each day that races by how precious each one is -- even those days that are hard.

I hope that when I shop for my Halloween candy in October, there is still some left for me. (If not, I’m sure I can get Christmas candy canes then.) But for now, I still want to hold on to the gift that is August. The gift that is now. The gift that is today. I want to walk, not race, through ordinary time.

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