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Time & Time-out

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Time & Time-out

“Time!” The command can be welcome, if we are tired, and are told that we have done enough. The word can be dreaded, if we are trying to finish a test or a pet project, and are told to stop. In these examples, “time” indicates cessation of activity, with no continuance. Another expression, “time-out” usually means a brief pause from activity, as when a team takes a break from playing the game for the purpose of making adjustments, or when parents have their children leave off what they are doing so that they might reconsider their behavior. We all need some time-outs from the ordinary occupations that take up the majority of our time.

If we take brief time-out periods, we might do as well or better for ourselves and everyone around us than would a basketball team or an over-involved child. Whether we are engaged in physical or mental work, entertainment or exercise, we will often gain inspiration, energy, and efficiency if we take even a moment or two for reflecting on what we are doing and why we are doing it. And when we momentarily open ourselves consciously to God, we do not lose time, but we add to the value of the time we have.

Taking a break or a time-out provides us with the means of achieving balance among various needs, and also with the opportunity for making some positive adjustments in our activities. We are good coaches or parents for ourselves when we deliberately pause as soon as we become aware – no matter how busy we are – of some imbalance or disproportion that needs our attention. Most of us have found it wise to pull over and stop a car if we hear a strange noise, or feel a change in the steering. Better to check to see if we have a flat tire or some foreign object clinging to the car than to continue on and perhaps have an accident. How wise we are when a “warning light” appears on the dashboard of our consciousness, and we pause to ask ourselves what it is that troubles us. We can make a quick modification to our intention, our direction, or our manner of acting, instead of continuing on past the graciously provided warning sign to a disappointing conclusion.

Though we are the ones who declare our own time-outs, we might treat as gifts of God the impulses we receive to pause for a moment. Even if we do not advert to it very often, we know that God will some day declare for each of us that “Time” that will mean the cessation of our activities in this life. When we receive a suggestion to make a temporary halt in the midst of thinking, writing, playing or working, we

are free to ignore the movement as it occurs in our minds and spirits, just as we can walk out in the rain and ignore the thought of using a head covering or an umbrella. Many of us have had an experience of "getting wet" when we were not humble enough to trust the God of "Time" when we were offered a "time-out." More frequently, perhaps, we have taken the moments that we needed to recognize a better way, a more honest response, or a more loving action, and made the needed adjustments. Everyone benefits when we respond in trust to God, the giver of all time.