

Well, here we are, it is May. Lent and Easter are done, the end of the school year is rapidly approaching, which also means Sunday school, Confirmation and 1G (One God Network) are close to their summer hiatus as well. In some ways, it almost feels like the calm after the storm; a sense of slowness to catch our breath before we start again in the fall. And there is nothing wrong with catching one's breath, but let's not stop and breathe too long.

Back in my running days, which feels like a lifetime ago, I ran three marathons - Twin Cities once (2008) and Grandma's in Duluth twice (2010, 2011). Part of my strategy for each of those marathons was to walk through the water stations to catch my breath and rest a little while having a little drink. Those stations were approximately 2 miles apart. Once through I would take off running again. The danger, though, was to take too much time to rest, so I had to be careful and be self-aware. At one point towards the end of the Twin Cities marathon, I was in an incredible amount of pain due to severe leg cramping. It felt like someone had shot both of my legs. I remember passing the 20-mile mark and thinking, "*I just need to stop and rest of a bit and then I'll be fine*". But as soon as that thought entered my head, another came in right behind it, "*Eric, if you stop and rest, you know that you will never get going again.*" And that second voice was right, so I pushed through, walking, and "running" the last six miles, in a lot of pain. But you know something? I finished and I was ecstatic. I learned a lot about myself during that race that helped me improve in my next two marathons.

Yes, we have had a long and busy year (a good busy), after coming out of a couple challenging years due to the pandemic and a pastoral transition. The temptation now is to stop and rest in this calm after the storm, but we must be careful that we do not lose the momentum we have built. So many good things have happened over the past 8 months or so, and even though you may be tired, let's keep pushing through. Walk through the aid station, refreshing yourself with the Living Water of Jesus, casting your burdens on him, and resting in his amazing love. But once through, let's hit the ground running in the fall. Do not let your tiredness now destroy your momentum. Satan would love nothing more. Turn to Jesus.

Soon, fall will be here, and it will be time to run again, with Jesus by your side, of course. How you rest and refuel during this calm time will pay huge dividends as we continue to advance the Kingdom of God. So, catch your breath and get ready. The marathon continues...