

Past can hamper living in the moment

I once had a car that began to chug, vibrate and make strange noises even after I turned off the ignition and removed the key. I took it to the garage to find out the cause of the problem.

To be honest, I do not remember exactly what the young mechanic told me was wrong with the machine. What I do recall is that he told me I would not have been experiencing the problem had I taken better care of the car.

Even though he was very courteous about the whole thing, it was a mildly embarrassing experience. But it was a good lesson. I have had some car problems since, but none that resulted from lack of proper maintenance.

Yesterday, as I watched an exciting baseball game at Frontier Field, I thought of the young mechanic and the lesson he taught me 30 years ago.

He came to mind because in the peaceful, relaxed and thoroughly enjoyable environment of our wonderful new ballpark, my spirit — much like that car 30 years ago — was chugging, vibrating and making strange noises even though I had shut off my motor.

In other words, I had by choice and with a joyful anticipation moved physically from work to leisure, but had not succeeded moving away from the cares and concerns of the day.

My guess is that we have all experienced such moments more times than we care to count. We want to relax,

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

change our pace or engage in a pleasurable activity. But we find in the doing that our minds are elsewhere, that there is a static from a past event or distraction about something in the offing that diminishes our capacity fully to relish the joy of the moment.

When I noticed such interference at the ballgame yesterday, I tried to be in touch with what might be claiming my attention beneath the surface of things.

I remembered that it was the first time in years that I had not spent Mother's Day with the family.

And that meant not being present for the traditional, same-day celebration of the birthdays of my nieces, Grace and Mary Ellen, and of my friend, Tom Powers.

I also realized that, because going to the game was a last-minute decision, I went alone. I learned that, while there are times I enjoy deeply the opportunity to be alone, going to baseball games is not among them.

As the game moved along and I con-

tinued to reflect on what might be interfering with the pleasure of the day, I became more relaxed.

And when the Red Wings scored eight runs in the seventh inning to take a lead they never surrendered, the distractions of the afternoon seemed much less bothersome than they had been earlier.

I draw no great lessons from all of this. But it was healthy for me to remember in the midst of it all that loneliness was likely a factor in the equation.

I probably had not been sufficiently in touch with the emotional impact of changing a long-standing family pattern nor with the reality that, for me at least, it is more fun to watch a ballgame with friends than it is to watch one alone.

Finally, I think the ballgame experience was a healthy reminder to me that we are not machines, that we cannot shift from work to leisure simply by turning a key. We need to allow time for our motors to stop racing and for our wheels to stop spinning.

As you read these words you might think of experiences you have had that resemble the one I had at the ballpark.

How do you deal with such things?

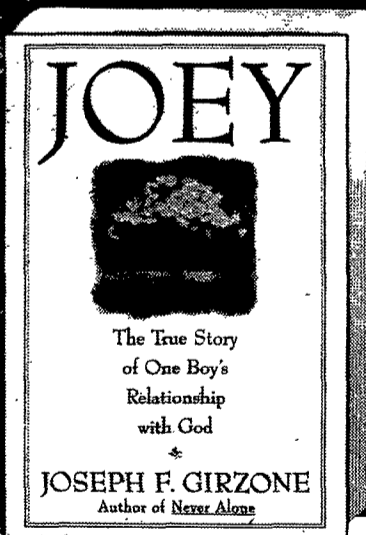
What helps you to come back to the goodness of the moment when stewing and fretting about the past or future would rob you of it?

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