

# How to fight flab of the body and soul

At age 54 I am trying more than ever to fight flabbiness, both spiritual and physical. It isn't easy. One technique is to combine prayer with exercise.

Now that the weather is nice, I have started doing "rosary walks" in the early evenings. I walk around our little town center for just as long as it takes me to say a rosary, usually 15 minutes or so. I get just about a mile in by the end of the fifth decade.

Rosary walks are peaceful. They also remind me to pray for my neighbors along my walk. I pray for the clients and workers at the Catholic Charities office next door. I pray for the guests at our homeless shelter and their volunteers. I pray for the police at the state police bar-

racks. I pray for the people at the county courthouse and the post office. I pray for all travelers as I pass the Holiday Inn. I pray for firefighters and EMT workers as I pass the firehouse. I pray for the residents of the little public housing complex along the way. As I round back on to Main Street, I see our church and pray for all our parishioners.

Praying makes the mile go faster. I also feel more at peace if I pray and walk than if I just walk around town.

A variation on the "rosary walk" is the Hail Mary swim. The credit for this one goes to my sister Maureen, who developed this at her local public pool. She would try to time her strokes so she could swim one length per Hail Mary.

Since I don't have a pool nearby, I



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use the "Our Father stair steppers" at the gym. I say an Our Father and a Glory Be for every 10 calories I burn on the machine.

I also try holy crunches and leg lifts. For this I use the opening lines of the Liturgy of the Hours. These prayers begin: "Oh God, come to my

assistance. Oh Lord, make haste to help me." This is a good prayer to say with resistance exercises. On the way up I say, "Oh God, come to my assistance." On the way down, "Oh Lord, make haste to help me."

Another "spiritual exercise" is the repeated genuflection. I go across the gym floor in a series of genuflections, first right knee, then left knee. It is harder than it looks, and I am out of breath.

In a flabby world it is important to remember that there is more to fitness than thinness. Physical discipline can also lead us to spiritual discipleship, fighting flab of the body and the soul.

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