

My daily prayer is simple ... "God, help me to be the person my dogs think I am." I don't know of any other creatures that love you more than they love themselves.

The "Walk and Wag 5K" in the park was for the "poochies", but as I ran it my thoughts were focused on the clock. I wanted to redeem myself from the previous week. Of course, it was 80 degrees the previous week, and this time it was in the low 50s, cloudy, damp, and gray.

The 5K is a short intense effort. It is redemption in itself. There is a symbolic baptism of pain and suffering, but it doesn't last too long. The beauty of it is, when it is finished, you once again recognize that you have experienced a simultaneous effort of pain, suffering, and euphoria. How wonderful that the chute, clock, and finish line appear.

For a few short moments you cross through it; and although you aren't the first runner across, you have won your race ... you won the race from within ... because that is where it comes from ... the energy, the spirit, and the divine carry you across the threshold of endurance and sport to the end of the race. And you recover and enjoy that special afterglow that only runners know. From the effort comes the joy ~ and being 95 seconds quicker than the previous week helps, too.

How much longer? I don't know. It seems as though the struggle is greater each time. I've never heard a runner say, "It's an easy race." No such thing ... not if you run it as a race. So I take the prize of the race itself ... just having shown up and been a part. I take it with me as I leave.

The digital clock at the finish line suggested to me that I had run well ~ certainly better than the previous week. But the clock itself never tells the rest of the story. And with each participant there is a story. Perhaps it, too, is one of redemption and recovery. Or perhaps it is just the will to finish the course and go home ... knowing that within each race there is another race and another story.

Sometimes just getting to the starting line is the challenge in itself. Whatever it is, the race remains special and always will be. Perhaps it is all because of its simplicity. In a world of troubled times, complex issues and uncertainty, the irony is that the race gives us a respite ... from everything.

May the wind be always at your back.

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