

The Counselor's Corner

"Progress, not perfection"

Every day I get a video from Matthew Kelly entitled, "The Best Lent Ever". Although his talks are designed to help Catholics make the best use of the 40 days prior to Easter, his message to try to live "a better version of one's self," can be applied to all religions and all days. Even those who do not follow an organized religion can benefit from his message.

He says that too many of us want big things and forget that small things add up. We strive for perfection when it is out of the realm of human beings. When we view positive daily movement as progress, our small steps add up. Like interest on our bank accounts, things get compounded.

The title of this article is Matthew Kelly's theme, and he urges us to be pleased with our progress. When we do, we will see that "better version of ourselves." When we opt out of this method, we can become stagnant, not feel good about ourselves, and become envious of others. After one of the talks, a young, athletic, female perfectionist commented that she used to be obsessed with her Fit bit. She would become upset when it revealed that she had not made her daily goal. Instead of concentrating on a 24-hour period, she decided to look at her weekly progress. She found that the average of those seven days showed that she had made great progress.

All of us need to set a daily goal but measure our progress in a bigger period of time like a week or a month. For example, if we occasionally miss keeping our Lenten commitments, we cannot allow ourselves to give up. Instead of getting frustrated, we can measure what we have accomplished at the end of a week or 40 days. If we have a goal of losing weight, we might give up easily if we weigh ourselves daily or multiple times each day. Medical doctors will tell us that there are so many variables to weight (even how much water we consume before we jump on a scale). Weight Watchers hold meetings weekly, not daily.

This week, I have been meeting with students and checking their academic progress. As of today, they have two weeks and two days until the end of the third quarter. Sometimes, their grades will be the lowest percentage for a grade, so they have to watch that the average does not fall. In other cases, they may be one point from receiving the next highest grade. To make sure they become "the best version of themselves" in academics, they need to make every effort toward progress in the amount of time allotted until the end of the quarter. To do this, they have to take daily steps to complete homework, pay attention in class, do all class work, put great effort into studying for quizzes and exams, and seeking the help of the teachers, as well as math and reading specialists on our campus. When this method is utilized, the third quarter will show progress, and discouragement will be minimal. The overall average for the three quarters will reflect achievement now, as well as at the end of the school year,

Whether an adult, teen, or child, we need to work toward our goals each day and not let setbacks get us down. Here is a toast to letting out "the best version" in each of us. What more can we ask?

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