



Things to Ponder

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An Unbeatable Combination

By Rev. Msgr. Kevin T. Hart

In 1940 a mother in Nashville gave birth prematurely to a baby girl who quickly caught pneumonia. Shortly after, she caught scarlet fever. Finally, she contracted polio which left one leg badly crippled and her foot twisted inward. When she was five years old, she hobbled about on metal braces. She envied the other kids who could run and skip rope.

When she reached eleven, the little girl started secretly walking without her braces, out of sight of her parents, her sister, and her friends. After a year of these secret and painful walks she confided in her doctor. He was flabbergasted, but finally agreed to permit her to continue her secret walks but only for very short periods of time. The girl's idea of a short period of time was far different from her doctor's idea. To her periods of walking without braces she added periods of prayerful trust in the Lord. To make a long story short, that girl eventually threw away her braces for good.

This true story illustrates the main point of today's Gospel (Luke 5:1-11), a point we need to hear again and again in life and see dramatized over and over: perseverance is one of the greatest powers in the world. Peter and his friends had fished all night without success. But Jesus told them to try one more time, and they placed their trust in Him. That final attempt marked the crossing from failure to success. Things changed when Peter and his companions allowed Jesus to become involved in their efforts, when he discovered that their efforts, coupled with the Lord's presence created an unbeatable combination.

That unbeatable combination works in our lives as well: our efforts and struggles coupled with ever-present power of Jesus at work in us. Like Peter we sometimes find ourselves in hopeless situations: a habit we cannot seem to lick; rebellious children in their teenage years who seem to disregard what their parents know is best for them; a medical condition that just won't go away; a job that has lost its interest; a disintegrating marriage or relationship, financial struggles, and the list goes on and on. Our own efforts seem to be useless.

But Jesus wants to get involved. He wants us to turn those situations over to Him. He may change them and make things new. Or he may give new insights and the power to accept them and see them as redemptive. In all those situations, He invites us to

recast our nets with Him.

Whatever happened to that girl who through prayer and perseverance threw away her braces? She began not just to walk. She began to run. And she ran and ran and ran. At the age of sixteen, this incredible woman qualified for the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne, Australia and went on to win a bronze medal in the 400-meter relay. Four years later, in the 1960 Olympics in Rome, she became the first woman in history to win three gold medals in track and field. Her name was Wilma Rudolph.

Wilma Rudolph is a shining example of the power of perseverance coupled with trust in the Lord. Her life dramatizes that no handicap, no weakness, no difficulty, is a match for perseverance and prayer. Put them both together, our efforts and the power of Jesus that comes to us through prayer and the result may well exceed our wildest imagination. That unbeatable combination worked for Wilma. It worked for Peter. And it will work for you and me.

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