

American Athlete Frank Shorter won the Gold medal in the Marathon at the Munich Summer Olympics in 1972. It was the first time in 64 years that an American had won the Gold medal in that particular event. Prior to an American winning the Gold, running in public would have been seen as strange or suspicious. A press report declared that because of Shorter's victory "distance running was changed forever ... transformed from the cult exercise of an eccentric breed of skinny men into what would become for many a way of life." Running moved from the school track to the streets ... and it remains in the mainstream to this day.

[This]/[Yesterday] morning, I decided to try my own luck at the "Leaping Lizard" 5 kilometer run in Bay City. Without much training, I managed to come in 4th in my age group ... and 49th overall out of a field of 138 runners. I managed a 5K time of 32 minutes and 51.6 seconds. Not a world record, but not bad considering my three favorite things to do are reading, eating, and watching TV.

And I suppose, technically, what I did probably doesn't qualify as running. Experts say that running means going faster than 6 miles per hour. I'll leave it to you to do the math ... so technically, [this]/[yesterday] morning I most likely was jogging. Although - mind you - it was the high end of jogging. Maybe next time ... :-)

One of the things I enjoy about running - other than stopping at the end - is the encouragement that runners give each other. When passing someone who's resorted to walking ... or jogging ... people sometimes will say: "Good job! Keep going!" And the people on the sidelines cheer for the runners, too. Which is nice. And more than nice, is very helpful to the runners. Because the mental part of running is forcing yourself to keep going for over half an hour.

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord. I suppose technically, I should say the "transferred" Solemnity; since for those of us old enough to remember, the Ascension ... which is 40 days after Easter ... actually falls on a Thursday. But, because of the priest shortage; and other cultural phenomenon ... the bishops of our particular region have decided many years ago to move Ascension Thursday to the following Sunday.

And in a week, we will celebrate the Pentecost Sunday ... when the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles and Our Lady in the Upper Room ... often called the “Birthday of the Church.”

When Our Lord ascended into heaven, we hear in the “Acts of the Apostles” that the eleven stood around staring up into the sky. As much as Jesus had prepared them for this, they were still not ready for it.

Yet, ready or not - the day arrived. And with the Ascension and Pentecost, the disciples have become witnesses to all that Jesus did while on earth ... as well as taking on the responsibility of being sent out ... as the Father sent Jesus ... to bring the Good News ... the Gospel ... out to the world.

We are the successors of the first disciples from nearly 2,000 years ago. And we too are called to be witnesses and messengers of the Gospel ... ready ... or ... not. And it is up to us to keep this going ... in a word ... we are called to “persevere” in Faith, Hope, and Love. Living the Gospel in our day to day lives ... joining together on Sundays and Holy Days to worship the Father in the Mass ... and to encourage each other through our prayers ... and the occasional positive affirmation ... and to be energized by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Sacraments ... so that we may go forth to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those we encounter out in the world.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us pray for the grace of perseverance ... the grace to keep going on our journey of Faith, Hope, and Love ... the grace to live out the Gospel every day in our lives ... the grace to be true disciples of Jesus Christ ... the grace to be messengers of the Good News.