

Random Thoughts

By Bob Thompson



What is Church?

While on a cool down run through Mine Falls Park with my wife, Kristina, on one spring Wednesday evening, she asked if I was going to church after the run. To which I replied “I was thinking about it” (which she correctly interpreted as “yes, definitely!”). A couple of runners were nearby and one of them piped in and said that he was going to church that evening for his son’s cub scout meeting. On a more recent Wednesday evening I was doing a cool down with a runner named Bill who is new to the Striders. (Actually, it wasn’t a cool down, but rather Bill and me had been dusted by Walter Swanbon and the others in the fitness group and were struggling to run our way back to the parking lot.) While jogging along, a pair of Striding Peters (Shajenko and Paelinck) approached from the opposite direction. It had been a while since I had seen either of them and they asked if I was going to church that evening and said “see ya later”. As Bill and I continued our jog, he asked me what church we

were going to. At that point, it became quite clear to me that there were many new members of the Gate City Striders that needed to understand what Wednesday evening church was all about.

On Wednesday evenings for many years members of the Striders have enjoyed post workout refreshments at the Club National on Pine Street in Nashua. To members of the Striders, the Club National is also known as church. Over the years many Strider events have benefited from these church services. Volunteers have stepped up, logistics worked out and even new races have developed.

The Club National may not be your typical church, but it does have it’s own special days on the calendar and it’s own terminology that you should be aware of. To help the many new Striders understand more about church and to help some old Striders with their failing memories I submit the following:

Wholey Days of Obligation and other Church Terminology:

First Communion - The first Wednesday after daylight savings time begins which is also the first night of workouts at the track. Church goers get together after a long winter and perform Penance. Baptisms often occur at First Communion.

Baptism - a runner’s first experience at church. Some of the baptized become disciples, apostles and high priests. Some are

never seen again.

High Priest - a longtime member of the Gate City Striders and longtime member of the Club National. Examples include George LeCours, Steve Doyle, Skip Cleaver, Tom Raiche and Mikey Wa.

Apostles - GCS members who are new members of the Club National. Steve Moland, Dave Camire, and Damien Rowe are newly anointed apostles.

Disciples - a semi-regular church attendee who is not an official member of the Club National. Examples include Bob Thompson and Rich MacDonald.

Penance - the obligation of an Apostle, Disciple or High Priest who has not attended church for several weeks. The church goer is obligated to purchase a pitcher of beer, a mystery meat pizza and some salted nuts and confess his sins to the congregation.

Ascension - the passing away of an apostle or disciple. The congregation raises a glass to the deceased and tell funny stories about the deceased. Examples include Ted Johnson and Ernie Henderson.

The Church Lady - any woman who becomes a regular church attendee. The original Church Lady was Wendy Winslow. Pam Hall, Jeannie Ferriera, and Sharon Yu make regular appearances at Church but not quite enough to obtain the moniker of Church Lady. (I believe they skip church purposely to avoid being known as the church lady.)

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Hash Wednesday - runners meet at church and discuss the hash run and other obscure topics. One night we actually talked about religion. Warren Church is the traditional hash-master. (Warren's last name is merely coincidental.)

High Mass - A church service when more than a dozen high, priests, apostles and disciples are in attendance.

Sacrifice - a generous tip left for god in appreciation of outstanding service. Example is \$2.00

God - Longtime GCS supporter Steve Langelier is your friendly bartender and cooks up a mean pizza delivered hot to the table. Do what god says and don't make a mess and entrance through the pearly gates will not be denied in the future.

Pearly Gates - High priests and apostles have a key to the pearly gates to gain entrance to church. Disciples and other members of the congregation must

buzz the door and god will unlock the door. Male disciples must sign-in under the name of a high priest or apostle. Female disciples do not need to sign-in.

Return of the Prodigal Son - the attendance at church by a High Priest, Apostle or Disciple who has moved away from the area which has prevented regular attendance at church. Examples include Steve Doyle, Fritz Hynson, Viet Tran, Skip Cleaver, Warren Church and the Reverend.

Reverend - Reverend Dave Williams, of course.

Good Wednesday - any Wednesday that Mother Superior has granted permission to attend church.

Mother Superior - the wife, or significant other, who grants permission to a High Priest, Apostle or Disciple to attend services, or denies permission due to sins committed.

Sins - the actions of a High Priest, Apostle or Disciple that re-

sult in Mother Superior denying attendance at church. Sins must be confessed and Penance must be performed at a subsequent Good Wednesday. An example of a sin would be when Mike Ward tells Carla (his wife) that he will be home at 10:00 p.m., but at 11:30 is buying "one more pitcher of beer".

Virgin Mary - any Strider women named Mary who has never stepped foot into church.

Lost Souls - former High Priests, Apostles or Disciples who disappear and do not return. Examples include Carl Chartier and Ron Pincence. Carl's laugh and Ron's presence are legendary at church.

The Last Supper - The last Wednesday before daylight savings time ends, which is also the last night of workouts at the track. A spaghetti feast is provided for all Gate City Striders. Reverend Dave Williams provides a blessing to all.

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when Mary barreled in with a determined smile on her face.

Shu's leg was a long loop through town and down to the southern outskirts. It returned partly on a bike path along the lake (One of the benefits of being captain). He did have to run up a monster hill just before the handoff to Kathy. I had to take the bus to the fourth exchange point so I was unable to see Shu's return.

When I arrived it was fairly hot and I still was wearing my tights. The only place to change was in a few port-a-potties. But with hundreds of runners milling about they were pretty crowded. So I resigned myself to the fact that I would have to run my leg in 70+ temperature in tights. Kathy arrived at the earliest time that we had predicted. Somebody must have run a good leg! My leg was as nice as I had imagined and I did get to pass a lot of marathoners. I must admit that a few relay runners passed me as I tired near the end. The finish was in Waterfront Park and I could see the finish line well before the 26-mile mark. We had to run a long way past it and then loop back partly on grass. I hate that!

We finished in 3:40:24 which beat our team's PR of 3:42 set the year before in RI. We finished 3 of four Senior Mixed teams. But when we finally found the awards ceremony in downtown Burlington we learned that they only went two deep in the relay (the other two teams did 3:16 and 3:22)..