The Path Not Taken

How many times have we looked back on events in our lives and reflected in retrospect, “I wish had chosen to take advantage of this opportunity.” So many of those opportunities can be accomplished so simply, and we wonder how we did not fully utilize the precious time God has given to us. I can recall this summer feeling particularly lazy and refusing a request from my wife to take a walk with her on a beautiful morning, only so that I could watch a sporting event on television. Fifteen minutes after she left, I regretted that decision and wondered why I had passed up on a rich opportunity for one that was not nearly as gratifying. On a larger scale, how often do we pass up on opportunities to make a significant difference to those around us, and take paths of least resistance? More importantly, failing to pursue these opportunities deprives us of the chance to grow as people and do good. During the course of our lives, we are constantly confronted with forks in the road on our journey to eternal life. What paths do we take?

The great American poet Robert Frost commented on life’s paths chosen in his poem “The Road Less Traveled” and to quote the last stanza of the poem:

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

In the Scriptures in a very similar way, Jesus presents to us through the following common passage the opportunity to follow him by choosing the best path to eternal life:

And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

If we view our lives as a series of forks in the road for which we must make choices, how do we approach each fork that we encounter? When Jesus came to the ultimate fork in his life deciding whether to endure the pain and suffering of dying on the cross or to have his Father rescue him, he chose the path that would lead to the salvation of all of us. In our lives, we will not have to face forks in the road of the magnitude Jesus had to face, and thankfully, when we choose a path that is not in keeping with the will of God, new forks will be presented to us that will allow us to return to a path that would provide us with the best opportunity to follow Jesus. In fact, we are fortunate that many of the forks that we will be facing may contain two right paths. Additionally, even if we take numerous wrong paths, because Jesus took the ultimate path to our salvation, we can continue to enjoy redemption by returning to the right path.

It is my hope that every path you choose brings you closer to God’s salvation, but as baseball great and humorist Yogi Berra once stated “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.”

>> Dr. John Smarrelli Jr., president, Christian Brothers University

CORRECTION
Photos of Nikki Shah, Valedictorian, and Katherine Walsh, Salutatorian, of St. Benedict at Auburndale were mislabeled as being graduates of St. Benedict Academy. We apologize for any confusion caused by not using the school’s proper name.

– FWT Editor

Nikki Shah, VALEDICTORIAN
Katherine Walsh, SALUTATORIAN