

Choices to make

By Father Joseph Breighner

So how long do you want to live? Dr. Lester Breslow, who spent his life working in public health, believed that certain healthy habits would help us to live longer. He proved the value of his own study. He died recently at the age of 97!

What are the healthy habits that his many studies revealed? There are seven: Do not smoke. Drink in moderation. Sleep seven to eight hours. Exercise at least moderately. Eat regular meals. Maintain a moderate weight. Eat breakfast.

An obituary in the April 15 issue of the New York Times, noted that: "... a 60-year-old who followed the seven recommended behaviors would be as healthy as a 30-year-old who followed fewer than three."

Yes, we all know people who smoke, drink too much, and consume a gallon of ice cream a day and live into their 90s! We also know of people who jog, watch their weight, and eat carrot sticks, who die in their 50s. I remember a comedian years ago saying: "Every time I go into a restaurant, I see all of these heavy people eating salads! These salads are killing us. Stop it!")

A study can't predict what will happen to any individual. A study can only tell us what happens to most people in certain situations.

In another sense, the longest life is still relatively short. Scientists estimate that Homo Sapiens, human like creatures, have been on this planet for about 60,000 years! A hundred years is not very long compared to that. Looking at the even broader picture, scientists believe our galaxy and solar system may be billions of years old. A hundred years is hardly a speck in that comparison.

No, at a deeper level, we long for more than just a few more years. We long for eternity. Our hearts really are restless. We are restless until we can find the source of eternal life.

That is what Jesus came to share with us. That is the God that Jesus revealed to us. That is the life that Jesus came to give us. That is why the food we put on our plates at home pales in comparison to the Bread of Life we receive in the Eucharist. The ordinary alcoholic beverage can't compare to the wine that becomes the Blood of Christ. Exercising our bodies reminds us not to neglect certain other exercises - to exercise our spirits with regular time for prayer and silence. And even if we sleep during the sermon, that may add to our physical and spiritual life. (I'm reminded of the true story of a pastor showing off his new church. The visitor asked: "How many does it hold?" Without missing a beat, the pastor replied: "Oh, it sleeps about 900 people."

Other studies indicate that those who believe in God, and have a religious family, report higher levels of happiness. We can do worse than "fall asleep in the Lord."

So how long do you want to live? We have choices to make for time and eternity.

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