

What does it come down to? Trust in God

Some years ago a priest from another country was watching how much food an American priest was eating. The visiting priest made the astute observation: “You are digging your grave with your fork!” (With Lent only a week away, that thought might assist our fasting!)

It’s been said that the United States has more food than any nation in the world and more diets to keep us from eating it! I think we Americans may have invented eating out as a recreational activity.

But what is the truth about healthy eating? Frankly, who really knows? Did you see the results of that study on nutrition? Here are its conclusions:

- “1. The Japanese eat very little fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.
2. The Mexicans eat a lot of fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than British or Americans.
3. The Japanese drink very little red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.
4. The Italians drink excessive amounts of red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.
5. The Germans drink a lot of beer and eat lots of sausage and fats and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.

Conclusion: Eat and drink what you like. Speaking English is apparently what kills you!”

(This is just another reason to welcome our many immigrants. They’re trying to teach us new languages! They may save our lives.)

While I’m presenting all of this in a light-hearted manner, the truth is that we are humbled by life. There is no one size fits all. The best that science can do is to point out generalities. In general, low fat is better than high fat. Not smoking is better than smoking. Moderate consumption of alcohol is better than high consumption of

alcohol. Yet we all know of someone who eats too much, smokes too much and drinks too much living into her 90s, and someone else jogging dropping dead in his 50s.

No, I'm not encouraging self-indulgence or irresponsibility. I'm simply encouraging humility. If we are healthy it may be an occasion to be grateful to God for the genes we inherited. And if we struggle with health issues, we don't have to beat ourselves up. It may not have anything to do with our choices.

When I suffered the strokes in my eyes in 2002, I didn't have a single risk factor. When I had blood clots in my lungs last May, I again had no risk factors. When I vented to my doctor, he said: "You can't be a doctor very long and not realize that some things that shouldn't happen, do happen, and things that should happen, don't happen!" Science is humbled in the face of the mysteries of life.

Let me close with a touching true story. Recently a wonderful woman, Deborah, came to see me. She has been a nurse supervisor and psychotherapist. Reading in bed one night, she suffered a heart attack. The 911 medical team could not regulate her heart. They took her to the hospital, pretty much telling the husband that she would not survive. At the hospital more complications happened. Through a special procedure, her body temperature was lowered to 91 degrees to minimize damage. When she was resuscitated, they expected her to be brain damaged and severely disabled. Instead, she was completely recovered! No medical explanation was possible. It was pure miracle. Functioning at a very high level, she now lives with a sense of pure gratitude.

The tragedies of life challenge us. The miracles of life uplift us. They remind us about life beyond life. However manhandled we may be during life, there is ultimately a good and gentle God beyond all of life. All we really have is trust in God, and that's all we really need.