

TAKING A BREATH

How often after a period of intense busy-ness do we enjoy stopping and taking a deep breath and re-grouping!

After the tedium of the election campaign, with its double-talk, delayed information, petty points-scoring and hidden agendas, the country as a whole is enjoying being able to take a breather.

If one has been following the fortunes of a sporting team for a whole season and then they are knocked out of contention, it comes as a sort of relief and the keen supporter can at last take a breather!

We've been involved in a legal battle which has dragged on for ages and finally things have been settled. We can take a breather.

A diagnosis that threatened our health has led to a long period of treatment and we have come through well and healthy again, a breather is called for.

The examples we could use are endless, but we'll stop here!

Enough to say that in a busy, hectic and sometimes muddled life, some time of rest, of reflection and of processing what we've been going through can be a real tonic.

Our liturgy each time we gather means to model this balance for us. The balance between sound and silence, between conversation and contemplation, between work and prayer is expressed through the structure and the content of the liturgy and can provide us with a wonderful pattern for our own living.

Naturally there are many ways to take a breather. I can be completely passive, such as when I allow myself to drift happily into holiday mode. This complete relaxation is most important for our good health at every level.

There is also the quiet breather I take when I slow down enough to notice the world around me, the faces of my children, the gift that my wife or husband are to me, the pleasure I take in the home I share with my family and so on.

There is another quiet place too that is well worth visiting. I can slow down enough to listen to the world inside myself, the place where my values are formed, where my attitudes develop and where my crises and challenges have their origin and their resolution.

The importance of visiting this place cannot be underestimated as a part of our growing into and maintaining good health.

Before we forget, as we take these breathers and start to taste life more deeply, if we are attentive we may also tune in to the voice of our loving God who lives in the depths of all these experiences. In our times of fun and celebration, in our times of sheer relaxation, in our times of reflection and decision-making, in our experiences of contemplating our children, our world, our families, if we are listening well enough, God's presence will emerge into view.

God, the beginning and ending of our very existence, showers us with graces every day. These graces bless us in our joy and also in our sadness, grief and suffering. There is not one of our human experiences that is beyond the reach of God's gracious, saving presence.

So now the election is well behind us, let's tune in this week and allow the grace of each moment to greet us, nourish us and call to us.

May each of us then be increasingly a gift of God's grace, ever more clearly seen and recognised as such.

Do yourself a favour and make sure you take a few breathers this week. Who knows what discoveries are waiting for you in the silence of your heart.

Father Kevin