

# Holiness & high fives

February 28, 2009

I guess the other runner I met out on the streets Sunday afternoon didn't need to read my February running log to know it was pathetic.

My excuse is that I've been traveling a lot lately. When I travel, I usually take along my running gear. But sometimes—and in February, I should have said "most times"—I never pull it out of my bag.

See, we live in this wired world, and I'm obsessive-compulsive when it comes to staying "caught up" (ha!) with e-mail and other work while I'm on the road. So, I get back to my hotel room after a day of meetings, and then I try to read and handle all my e-mail and maybe take on other chores. In February, I couldn't get it done at night. So, instead of running early in the morning, I pulled out the laptop instead.

## **Boost up the hill**

And my running log is the proof. Worse, my body is proof.

So, I approached my much-needed run last Sunday afternoon with anticipation and dread. I knew I'd feel better later, but I also knew it was gonna hurt. Turns out, I was right on both counts.

Just past the halfway point, I turned onto Hertz, home of "the hill." It's practically nothing compared to really hilly places. But around here, it counts for a hill. I just started up when a young guy, in his mid-20s, came blazing toward me.

Maybe he is just friendly. Maybe he was floating on endorphins. Or maybe he saw the "guy who hasn't been running enough going uphill" look on my face. Whatever, just before we reached each other, he held up his hand and

gave me a high-five.

I know this is sorta weird, but I can't describe what a boost that was. A friendly gesture from someone who looked like he could run a marathon and not break a sweat. Young runners like that usually get this steely, straight-ahead look and don't acknowledge folks who ran past their prime a few years back.

But this guy gave me a high five. All of a sudden, I didn't feel alone running up the hardest part of my trek. And feeling part of something outside myself, I didn't feel as tired and winded. My attitude switched from "I just wanna survive" to "what a beautiful day for a run."

### **'Barnabas' to others**

And as I ran, I thought about the power of encouragement.

One of the greatest praises I can bestow on someone is to call them a Barnabas. Do you remember Barnabas? He was a companion of the Apostle Paul. Better than that, he was the Christian who reached out to Paul and welcomed him into the family of faith. Barnabas' name means "son of encouragement," and his mama and daddy must've known what they were doing. Imagine the impact this encourager Barnabas had on the early church and, consequently, on all Christendom.

And try to imagine the kind of impact we can have on the world around us if we practice encouragement. Maybe it's a high five. Or maybe it's an e-mail or note. Perhaps it's a hug or a homemade pie or a cup of coffee. Maybe it's a timely phone call or text message.

We all know we're living in hard times. Plenty of folks need to have their spirits lifted. Why don't we infuse the presence of Christ into their lives by encouraging them?